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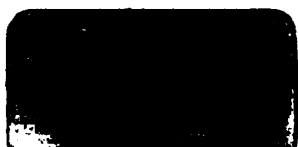
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"Not even the warm caresses he had so long ceased to lavish upon her could recall her to herself."

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SKETCHES OF RUSSIAN LIFE
IN
THE CAUCASUS.

BY A RUSSE,

MANY YEARS RESIDENT AMONGST THE VARIOUS MOUNTAIN TRIBES.

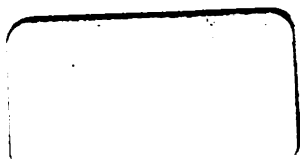


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INTRODUCTORY REVIEW
OF
RUSSIAN LITERATURE.

AN author's evident aim in the composition of a preface is to induce the reader, through its agency, to peruse the work which he puts before him; and in no other instance, perhaps, is such inducement so necessary as when the author comes forward with an untried subject,—a subject upon which the public has little experience, and a subject, therefore, upon which it is difficult to form any conclusion.

Such, however, is the position in which we find ourselves at the present time.

Ere we enter upon the scenes and adventures which form the subject of this book, it will be necessary to preface them with some account of the literature of the country and of the people, where and among whom all the circumstances which we are going to detail actually took place—and of which, courteous reader, I might say you know no more than you do about China.

“Hold!” we hear from every side. “Come, come: compare Russia with China—psaw!—it is too absurd. Why, we simply make a dash over from Berlin or Vienna, to your Petro-politan city of the Czars: or we run up the Baltic, and there we are, and so——”

Excellent. Well, friends, but then you never *do* it! Which among you puts into execution this gallant transit from the

Prussian or Austrian capital to St. Petersburg or Moscow? How few of you indeed, comparatively, find your way—except with some definite object—even to Berlin or Vienna. Who turns his yacht's prow up the Baltic? who embarks upon that dark and stormy sea at all, when he has the choice of the sunny Mediterranean?

This is self-evident, and for many reasons most natural, when we consider the immense distance of the nearest frontier of the Russias; the expense, and the prevailing opinion, as to the inhospitable nature of the climate—the summers of which, in reality, vie in brilliancy and intensity of temperature with those of the most southern countries. The language itself too, is a great obstacle to national intercourse: its sound, construction, pronunciation, grammar—its very alphabet—the very character in which it is written, have scarcely any affinity with those things to which strangers have been accustomed. The Russians are also essentially an *exclusive* people, and the passport system is of the severest kind. Thus it is that Russia is the last country for the wanderer, the fortune-seeker, or the adventurer. Hence but few foreigners travel in Russia, and few Russian subjects quit their own confines. It is only the *élite* who find their way to the capitals of Western Europe—and they are of all classes the least communicative. This, then, is Russia's position with regard to the world at large, and foreigners will not visit that country and judge for themselves. No wonder, then, that they remain in a fog of prejudices and false impressions; thinking little about the matter, and knowing less.

Most of the information that has hitherto reached foreigners rests upon the *dicta* of certain writers, who made their observations in the second-rate *salons* of St. Petersburg or Moscow, among a people whose language they could not understand, and with whom they had no sympathies in common.

Perhaps, courteous reader, you have not even consulted these luminous authorities, so that I may in fact return to my original assumption—namely, that you have a general idea of Russia, as you have of China, and that you know very little more of the one than of the other. I do not of course allude to universal travellers, for you have had them at all times; such a one is even mentioned in the “Canterbury Tales,” as having been everywhere—

“As well in Christendome as heathenesse,

* * * * *

Among alle nationes—and in Pruce.

In Lettowe had he resyed, andd in Ruce.”

Another ancient voyager, who not only penetrated as far as “Ruce,” but who also gave his opinion of her inhabitants in the most candid manner possible, was old Tuberville, the secretary of the ambassador to “the Muscovite,” in the reign of the great Queen Elizabeth, and who wrote “Certaine Letteres in Verse” upon the country and the people, and among other pleasantries, he says—

“Wilde Iryshe be ass civille as ye Russes in theyr kynde:

Harde choyce, which iss ye beste of bothe, eche bloodie, rude, andd blynde.”

And I fear from the tone of some later English writers upon Russia and her people, that very little liberality has been acquired upon this subject, since the days of that be-ruffed and peaky-bearded diplomatist.

Russia as you know her, possesses an immense superficies of territory, and is inhabited by a singular half-civilised and reserved population. Their boundaries are their desert wastes of snow-clad steppes; their architecture is semi-oriental and whimsical in the

extreme; their men are oddly costumed, and wear their hair in an eccentric manner. They principally trade in hides, tallow, flax, and a peculiar and valuable leather, which emits an agreeable odour, and which is used in the binding of your choicest books and the manufacture of your dressing-cases. Of their diet—you believe that they have an extraordinary *gusto* for raw brandy and train-oil, and that a Russian serf would regale himself upon a rushlight, with the same enjoyment that a schoolboy in this country would luxuriate upon a lollipop. You know that the Chinese were continually involved in long and sanguinary wars with the Tartars: you believe that the Muscovites were equally embroiled with those predatory nomades. You are convinced that Peter the Great of Russia was a most remarkable personage, and that he did many wonderful things.

This is in fact the sum and substance of what you know of the ethics, religion, and literature of the sixty-five millions of your fellow-Christians inhabiting the Russias!

Now this inaccurate no-knowledge is somewhat lamentable, for if you will take the trouble to reflect for a moment, you will find that the past, the present, and the future of this immense empire, precipitate the mind into a maze of wonder and speculation. Her past history—such as it is—is marvellous, from the unprecedented rapidity with which she has sprung, like a mighty fact, into existence: her present is extraordinary from the stupendous effects produced in so incredible a space of time: while, if we are to imagine her continuing throughout the next century the gigantic strides towards power and progress she has been making in the present and the preceding one—if we are to believe her capable of carrying out her colossal plans for improvement—and if we are to anticipate the eventual population and reclamation of her rich and boundless steppes, to the family bosom of European civilisation; if we are to imagine all this—and, reason-

ing by analogy, we cannot entertain a doubt upon the subject,—what must be our impression of the ultimate destinies of Russia? Should you conceive these remarks a little overcharged, turn your eyes to the map, on the wall of your study, and you will find—what you were doubtless acquainted with before, but which you have forgotten, or overlooked—that this same Muscovite Empire is nearly as large as all collective Europe put together, embracing an area of three hundred and sixty-seven thousand one hundred and twelve square miles; that this empire forms of itself the twenty-eighth part of the entire globe, the ninth part of the known continent, and comprises within its own limits the fifteenth divisional portion of the inhabited surface of the earth.

Look also at the public and political facts that are passing all around you, and read the public prints in which they are recorded. The whole world in fact is conscious—nay, almost morally oppressed, with a sense of Russia, as a vast and lowering, though vague and distant, fact.

At the “Great Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations, in 1851,” all Europe was surprised at the proud position occupied by Russia; and not few or far between were the exclamations of astonishment that fell from the “intelligent and well-informed Englishmen” and their charming and accomplished wives and daughters, upon witnessing the superb specimens of Muscovite art, objects of *virtu*, *bijouterie*, and of elegance, that Paris, London, Vienna, or Florence, could not have surpassed or even perhaps equalled.

Then, again, in the society to which you, dear reader, are habituated, both in this country and in the salons of the French capital, individuals of both sexes are to be met with, remarkable for their extreme elegance and refinement, and for the ultra-Parisian accent with which they speak—what you in common with every-

body else would have conceived to be their native tongue, till your opinion was in all probability shaken, by hearing them converse in three or four other languages—among them your own—and in each with the same ease and fluency; and upon inquiry you have discovered that the gentleman or lady who so attracted your attention and perhaps admiration, was no more French than yourself, but was in reality a Russian, a Muscovite, a mere Scythian.

And you were naturally surprised—that, is unless you had previously been accustomed to mix in the high diplomatic circles of the leading capitals of Europe; and if you took the trouble to think at all upon the subject—which you probably did not—you would have remembered that even as late as the time of Louis the Fourteenth—even during the period of the Augustan age of British literature—the country which had produced that elegant gentleman or lady, was sunk in the obscurity of the grossest ignorance and most savage barbarism. And it might have occurred to you that the ancestors of this lady and gentleman, but a few generations removed, would have caused a sensation most probably of a very different description in society—that is, unless they had made a little progress since Tuberville delineated them for the admiration of his countrymen, as so “bloodie, rude, andd blynde.”

However, I think I have said sufficient to prove that Russia is in every way entitled to more curiosity, if not interest, than is usually accorded to her; and that if you will only take the trouble, you may find much—very much, in everything that appertains to her, that will both instruct, surprise, and amuse you.

Are you aware, besides this, that Russia possesses a literature of her own? You will most probably answer: “Oh, yes! I suppose she has; but I never heard of it.”

Pushkin was a great poet; but he was neither a Shakspeare, a Goethe, nor a Dante. Nevertheless, if you could read him in the

original, I assure you that he is in every way worthy of your attention. No such master-mind of poetry or letters has Russia yet produced ; but its progress toward excellence has been rapid of late years. That you have not seen translations of its best authors is a natural consequence of the extraordinary nature of the tongue in which they are written, and which, I repeat, is almost unsurmountable to a foreigner—and to master it, sufficiently for literary purposes, would be in itself for such a person the labour of a life. Excepting the Chinese (the parallel again) there is perhaps no language in the world fraught with so many difficulties. In the first place, the Russian alphabet possesses nine more letters than your own, and is made up of Greek, Roman, and Slavonic characters. In 1699 the first Russian book was printed at Amsterdam, and it was about the year 1704 or 1705 that Peter the Great himself made many alterations in the old Slavonic letters, for the purpose of assimilating them more nearly to the Latin ones ; and the first Russian journal was printed with this type at St. Petersburg in 1705—four years after the foundation of that city—from a fount which had been cast for him by artists brought from Holland. In the old Slavonic alphabet there are forty-six letters ; but the modern Russian language comprises only thirty-five. In all matters, however, of a theological nature, the antique form is even now retained, and this constitutes the difference between the “ *Cserkovnoi* ” and “ *Grashdanskoi*,” or the civil and church alphabet. This, in a great measure, must explain the difficulties which a foreigner would have to contend with, in attempting to render himself master of the Russian language ; but if it were possible for him to do so perfectly, he would discover an extraordinary copiousness, a delicacy, and beauty of expression that would indeed surprise him. The Russians, having been in the earlier and darker portions of their history subjected to Scandinavian, Mongolian,

Tartar, and Polish influence, have preserved many of the words and idioms of the several dialects. Another remarkable feature in the Russian language is the extraordinary facility of construction it admits of, and rarely with danger of becoming obscure or unintelligible: in this, it much resembles Greek and Latin; but its leading peculiarity, and perhaps defect, is a paucity of conjunctions. And yet, on the other hand, this may account for the Russian language being so singularly comprehensive and distinct, since it can merely allow of comparatively short sentences; notwithstanding which, its adaptability for the purposes of poetry are incontestable; but whether it is really capable of entirely following and imitating the classic metres, is still a *vezata quæstio* among Slavonic philologists.

In common with all dialects of Slavonic origin, the Russian is also remarkable for its euphony and versatility; and it also embraces not only the sounds of every known language, but every guttural lisp and slur of which the human voice is capable.

The language is also divided into three leading dialects. The first is the "Russian proper," or the language spoken in the two capitals, Moscow and St. Petersburg, and throughout the northern and central portions of the Empire;—it is the literary language of all the Russias. Secondly, in the southern and south-eastern provinces the *Malo-Russian* is spoken,—which dialect is supposed to approach nearer to the "old Slavonic" than any of the others: the idiom of Red Russia, in the northern and eastern districts of Hungary, and to the eastwards of Galicia, inhabited by the Russniacks, is almost identical with the *Malo-Russian*. Thirdly, in Lithuania and Volhynia, and other portions of White Russia, the people speak the *White-Russian* dialect. The geographical position of these districts should fully account for the Polish words and idioms which are here to be found. This, the

youngest of the Russian dialects—although the first translation of the Holy Scriptures was made in it—is also the furthest removed of the three from the old Slavonic.

I now propose to give you a short synopsis of the present state of letters throughout that empire: firstly, because I think that the subject would be perhaps of some small general interest; secondly, because I do not wish you to look upon these fragments, as a curiosity emanating from a New Zealander and New Zealand; and thirdly, to prove to you that our literary *status* deserves to be known and appreciated as it merits—that is if energy and perseverance are entitled to success. The progress of our literature during the last twenty years has been as rapid and unprecedented as it has been brilliant. If you cannot come to our far northern land, to learn our language, to enable you to value our standard authors, and thoroughly understand and translate their works, we have no other resource but to visit you, and acquire and write for you, in your own, so as to make you acquainted with facts concerning our mighty fatherland, of which you know so little. How few of you have even read the meagre data of the few writers on this subject, whose works are accessible to you! About twelve years ago the German work of F. Otto, upon the history and career of Muscovite literature, was translated into English by Mr. Cox. The position of our *belles lettres* has been treated of in the “Encyclopædia Americana,” in a number of articles translated from the German “Conversations Lexicon,” though not in their most recent order. Doctor Henderson, too, in 1826 published his “Biblical Researches and Travels in Russia:” this book contains as much information, (if not more) upon Slavonic matters, as any that has been written in the English tongue; it also contains the alphabets of the Kyrillic and Glagolite characters. Dr. Bowring has also contributed some excellent translations from the Russian

Anthology : and scattered through the volumes of the "Foreign Quarterly Review," of late years, may be found a series of valuable contributions from different sources, upon the same subject.

This, I think, comprises the whole of your authorities upon this subject, in the English language, and in all probability you have never consulted any of them.

At the commencement, however, I must premise, that it is but the origin and progress of literary talent in the land of the Czars that I purpose submitting to you, in a sketch—a mere outline. And when Mr. Cox tells you, in his translation of Otto's excellent German book, on the Russian *belles lettres*, that he himself saw a list of twelve hundred writers in Otto's possession, irrespective of the two hundred and fifty in the lexicon of notable Russian *littérateurs* published with the book,—you will easily perceive that, limited as I am to a few pages of preface, it would be impossible for me to pretend to do anything more in addition than to give you their names, together with those of their leading and principal works.

Russian literature, too, notwithstanding all the many disadvantages under which it labours, a few of which I have detailed, is acquiring an importance that nothing can repress or subdue. This may be believed when it is stated that from 1833 to 1843 (a period of merely ten years), according to the official returns of the Minister of "*Narodnago Prosvestchenija*" (national instruction), no less than seven millions of volumes of Russian books were printed, and nearly five millions of foreign works were imported. In one particular year of that period, in 1839, eight hundred and eighty different works were printed and published within the Russian dominions ; and an average of only seventy of this number were translated from foreign languages. I may here observe that during those ten years (ending with 1843), seven

hundred and eighty-four new schools were opened, until in 1848 there were within the Russias no less than 2,190 schools and institutions of all descriptions, for the education of all classes of persons, and among these as many as six universities. In all these establishments it was then calculated that no less than 115,500 scholars received daily instruction.

It is not to be denied, that "old Mother Russia" ("Matushka Rossia") had her writers and poets; and it was as lately as 1794 that Count Mussin Pushkin (no relation to the poet of that name,) by mere chance discovered the chronographic manuscript of an epic poem, that seems to have been written in the twelfth century, and is entitled "Slovo o Polku Igora" (or, "A Word upon the Band of Igor"). It is of the greatest beauty, and forms an invaluable addition to the national poetry of the people; but it may be apocryphal, notwithstanding all that has been advanced to the contrary; and it is strange that, in the general search that was instituted immediately after its discovery, throughout the libraries, from one end of the empire to the other, no similar relic has been found. But with the exception of the writings of the monks, we have no trace of literature of any kind during the darker period of Russian history. Nestor, Basil, and Sylvester—all priests—wrote the annals of their times; Kyril, too, and many other holy men excelled in theological disquisitions, some of which are still extant; but almost every record of that early period was destroyed by the Mongol-Tatars of the Middle-Horde, who, for upwards of two hundred years, kept the Muscovite princes in a state of subjection. It was not till the middle of the fifteenth century that Russia was once more free; but her people had been too long restrained from any attempt at enlightenment, by their savage oppressors, to be able to compete with their more western rivals in the race for improvement: those fatal years had given them

too long a start, and the Muscovites abandoned the idea of emulating this onward progress in despair. It was not until the accession of Peter the Great to the throne that any positive change took place; and during this period the more educated Russians were influenced by the Polish and German literature and languages, which may be accounted for by the fact, that the fourth Ivan (1533-1584)—surnamed “Ivan the Terrible,”—when engaged in the siege of Kazan against the Tatars, obtained the assistance of certain military engineers from Germany, and who in many instances remained in the Muscovite service. The influence which those foreigners exercised was soon after visible throughout all grades of Russian society; and from that time the moral action of the example of Western Europe upon the vast territories of the Czars has been ever increasing and progressive.

It was in the reign of Ivan, too, that the first printing-office was established at Moscow; and in 1565 he founded a school of Theology. The Machiavellic Czar, Boris Godunoff, though his reign was short (1598-1605), also interested himself in the education of the young Muscovite nobility of his time. The Czar Michael, the first of the present House of Romanof, ascended the throne in the year 1613, and was followed by Alexis and Feodor the Third, the father and brother of the Great Czar and first Emperor, Peter the Great; these prepared the way ably for the rapid and gigantic strides of that master-mind among Reformers.

Peter the Great was essentially practical and a utilitarian. To teach his people the habit of looking for information into books, he caused a number of the best works to be at once translated into Russ, from the different languages of Europe. He was vigorously assisted in his laudable endeavours by Theophan Prokovitch, the *Archiepiscop* (archbishop) of Novgorod, who from his virtues and talents was called the

Muscovite Chrysostom, and who alone wrote no less than sixty works.

Peter's views were furthered by many gifted and excellent men ; and last, but not least, by Gluck, the Livonian clergyman, who had been made a prisoner during the war of Peter with Charles XII. of Sweden, and who had brought up that interesting and humble girl in his modest household, who was afterwards destined to become the Empress Catharine I. of all the Russias.

During this period of Russian history and the reign of Peter I., from 1682-1725, Prince Kantemir was perhaps the most brilliant literary light that Russia possessed : he was a great classic and linguist ; he wrote upon very many subjects, and his satires are still greatly admired ; he died in 1745. As lyric poets, two Cossacks particularly distinguished themselves, Kirscha Daniloff and Klemovki : the national songs of the former writer, about the heroic Vladimir and his gallant *Boyards*, are still admired and prized in Russia.

About 1724, a Russian and a poet turned his attention to the nature of his native language, and its adaptability for poetry, and he strenuously suggested the adoption of classical metre, founded upon measure and quantity ; but his efforts and almost his works were soon lost sight of, notwithstanding the warm co-operation of the Empress Catharine, who even went so far as to impose as a punishment for any little fault of etiquette among her courtiers, that they should learn by heart a certain number of the verses of her *protégé*—their quantity, of course, being commensurate with the little offence committed.

The Empresses Catharine I., Anna, and Elizabeth, were certainly munificent patronesses of the *belles lettres*. It was in the year 1755, and during the reign of Elizabeth, that the University of Moscow was founded, among many other educational institutions, subject of course to a governmental censorship.

The free erection of printing presses all over the country was granted by a ukase in the year 1783, during the reign of Catharine II.

The bulk of the people had, of course, but little improved by these efforts at mental progress; and yet it was in the family of a humble fisherman in the north of the empire, from the neighbourhood of Archangel, that Michael Lomonosoff was born, about the year 1711 or 1712. Notwithstanding every difficulty he made himself a linguist, a scientific authority, and a philosopher; he for some time pursued his learned labours and researches at Freiburg, in Germany. Besides being the author of the Russian Grammar, he was the first to draw a distinct line of demarcation between the ancient Slavonic and the modern Russ—at least, as spoken in his day. He wrote a history of his century, and a long and sustained national epic poem, entitled the “Petroide,” which, as may be conceived, was a lofty panegyric upon the talents and virtues of his imperial master. He wrote principally upon mineralogy and chemistry; he was also the author of several respectable tragedies, and of many miscellaneous works. Lomonosoff, perhaps, cannot so much be designated a great and original genius, as a man of the most enlightened capacity, and energetic talent. He is however undoubtedly the Father of Russian Letters—and was the first “*litterateur*” of European celebrity that the country had produced. After having been employed by the government with distinction for the greater portion of his life, he died in 1765, universally regretted throughout the empire.

The reign of Catharine II., from 1762–1796, is one of the most brilliant epochs of Russian history; and the period between the death of Lomonosoff and the close of the century in which he lived, was particularly marked by the number of gifted and eminent men, whose unceasing energies tended to strengthen

and nourish the tottering childhood of Muscovite literature as it then stood. The "Iliad" and "Æneid" were ably translated by Kostroff and Petroff; an excellent version of Pope and Locke was presented to his countrymen by Popovski; and Ariosto and some portions of the "Inferno" of Dante were submitted to the Empress by Bulgakoff.

A contemporary with Lomonosoff was Cheraskoff, who has been called the Russian Homer. Sumarokoff for a considerable time was his rival in public opinion. Both these poets were remarkable for their extreme fertility; and the number of tragedies, comedies, poems, and odes which they produced so rapidly was the theme of never-ending astonishment and speculation. But Gabriel Derjahvin, who was born about the year 1743, was incontestably the greatest Russian poet of the period. His ode to God has not only been translated into most European languages, but even into the Japanese, according to the Russian traveller Golownin, who saw it hanging in a place of honour in the temple of Joddo; and it is a known fact that it is versified in the language of the Celestial Empire, where it is hung up in the palace of the Emperor, printed on white satin and in letters of gold.

Hippolyt Bogdanovitch, a charming writer upon light and general subjects, and Chemnitzer, the fabulist, also flourished at this period. At the same era several eminent Russians occupied themselves with the formation of the national theatre, for which it was discovered that the Muscovite genius possessed a strong and decided natural aptitude. Kniashnin, Maïkoff, Nikoleff, Klushin and Daniel von Wisin—the protégé of Prince Potemkin, were the authors of several *chefs d'œuvres* of dramatic composition which have descended to our own day, and which afford as much pleasure even now to the Russian who witnesses them as upon the first occasion of their representation. The first Russian

theatre was opened in Jaroslav in 1746, and the nucleus of a national stage was founded at Moscow in 1759; and in St. Petersburg the *artistes* were permitted to establish themselves by letters patent as early as 1754.

It will be observed that from the very earliest period the Russians have ever sought to annalise their national history with an undeviating devotion;—and this can only be attributed to the feeling of patriotism that is, and that has ever been, so widely diffused throughout the empire. Hence, from the most remote times, when the little learning that had found its dubious way to the hyperborean wilds of Russia was celled and isolated in the convents of the priesthood, as early even as the beginning of the twelfth century, the work had begun with the local histories of Nestor, which were continued after his death by the priests:—even during those fearful two centuries and a half when the Russians were writhing under the horrors of Tatar dominion.

Unhappily these relics of the past are of but slight value to Europe generally, and of little interest even to a Russian, as they treat only of the different phases of violence and anarchy, caused by the continual wars peculiar to all people in those dark times, and to the international feuds of the turbulent and powerful Boyards, which so particularly convulsed Russia, till the advent of the terrible Ivan Vassilievitch to the throne of the Czars.

But the period of which we are writing—the close of the foregoing century—was rich, too, in the appearance of historians of different descriptions. Among the ranks of her men of letters, Golikoff, Rietchkoff, and Jemin gave to the world several volumes, the contents of which were dedicated to particular portions and phases of the history of the country. Teshulkoff wrote upon the rise and progress of commerce in his native land; while Boltin, himself an historian of considerable merit, had the honour of

reviewing the fifteen volumes of Russian history written by the accomplished Prince Tchetcherbatoff. Nor must Müller be forgotten: though his name be German, he himself was a Russian, and the whole of his existence had been dedicated to the furtherance and development of that Russian literature, of which he had himself, as it were, witnessed the very birth. He published the first Russian periodical in 1755, the columns of which were principally occupied by historical subjects of interest to the Russias.

The year 1724 witnessed the foundation of the Imperial Academy of Sciences; and in 1783 that of the Imperial Russian Academy; and in less than five years afterwards the last-named institution published the first (true) standard grammar of the language, together with an etymological dictionary of considerable pretension, and upon an arrangement of a novel nature. These important steps in philological advancement were particularly induced by the munificent patronage and general encouragement afforded them by the Empress Catharine.

There were also a host of Biblical and theological writers at the close of the last century; and it were needless to name them all, except to state that Konniski, the Archiepiscop of White Russia, and Platon Leovshin, the Metropolitan of Moscow, were the most eminent of all these authors in dogmatic and speculative religion. Of the latter distinguished theologian, it may be as well to mention, that one of his most important works, entitled, "The Summary of Christian Divinity," has been translated by the learned Doctor Pinkerton, in his "Present State of the Greek Church in Russia."

From the commencement of the present century, and during the reign of the Emperors Alexander and Nicolas the First, from 1801 to the present moment, the progress of Russian letters has been accelerated with a rapidity and success that are really marvellous. In the year 1820 alone, nearly three thousand five hundred

works were produced; about a thousand of which had been translated from the French, English, and German tongues. This fecundity in literary productions may in a great measure be attributed to the liberal encouragement of the emperors, and the thorough reformation which they had set on foot in all the scientific institutions of the country. The various existing academies were reorganised and extended, whilst four new universities were added to the empire. In 1823 a college was founded in the new capital, for the study and culture of the oriental languages; and a few years later Odessa boasted of a similar school. The most marked success has attended them all, which was no doubt the result of the interest which the government experienced in the object sought to be attained,—not the least salient proof of which was the express clause in the Treaty of Peace, which was entered into during the reign of Alexander with Persia in 1813, at Gulistan, wherein he stipulated expressly for the delivery to the Russian plenipotentiaries, of
 ✓ 500 of the most valuable manuscripts, the names of which had been drawn up by those distinguished authorities on Orientalism, Senkovski and his colleagues, and which were known to be in the possession of the Persians. They were afterwards deposited in the Asiatic Museum at St. Petersburg, for the use of the students of the oriental schools, which were no doubt originally founded for the training of diplomatic agents among those people, but which have nevertheless been of the greatest utility to the study of the philology of the East, not only for the Russians themselves, but for all Europe. Among these invaluable relics of past ages, are the Geography of Ptolemy, and some translations in the Arabic, of several important Greek and Latin works, of which the originals are no longer extant.

Nicholai Karamzin is however the next literary luminary of whom we have to treat. He died in 1826. His principal work is

his "*Istoria Rossiskago Gosudarstva*," or "History of the Russian Empire," but which only extends to the accession of the present dynasty—the illustrious house of Michael Romanoff in the year 1613. It consists of eleven volumes. And this most important production has been translated into the more prominent languages of Europe. Its second edition was published in 1818. His other voluminous labours have been collected and condensed into nine large volumes, which were again given to the public in 1820, in the form of a third edition. His career of literary distinction was commenced by a periodical work which he published under the title of the "*Moscow Journal*." The second periodical which he owned and edited was the "*European Messenger*."

Karamzin is essentially a *Russian* writer, and no Muscovite ever understood the pliancies and delicacies of his language so well; but the charm of his writings is so purely one of idiom, so entirely national, that it is next to impossible for a foreigner to appreciate him according to his merits.

This distinguished writer was early of opinion that the construction of the French and English tongues was preferable to the classical tone usually given to Russian prose, and which he considered as fettering its graceful and discursive powers. He brought his theory into practice, by himself adopting the easy style peculiar to the western tongues. But he was early opposed in this innovation by Admiral Shishkoff—himself an author of no mean celebrity; and the war of opinion that was thus originated still exists, under the name of the "*Slavonic and Russian*," or "*St. Petersburg and Moscow parties*." In his lyrical poems, and indeed throughout his entire works, there exist a warm patriotism, a national *verve*, a grace and an indescribable tenderness that must always endear them to his countrymen; while the learning and indefatigable research displayed in his superb "*History of*"

the Russian Empire" will ever constitute it the standard work upon this subject in the repertory of Slavonic literature: and it is perhaps from the period of his influence that the renewed energy to be remarked in literary taste in Russia may be deduced.

Nevertheless, in 1829, three years after his demise, a new history of the empire was announced, in twelve volumes, by Polevoi, the celebrated editor of *The Telegraph of Moscow*, who did not hesitate to stigmatise the history of his predecessor as neither "practical nor philosophical;" but his own work, which he soon after gave to the public, proved that his particular method of handling this difficult subject had rendered him liable to considerable animadversion. Polevoi, however, though "a man of the people," and utterly devoid of regular education, or of any pretensions to classicality, by his untiring energy and extraordinary perseverance and sagacity, acquired a great literary name among his countrymen, and succeeded in making his very popular periodical an organ of the first importance in the arena of the Russian *belles lettres*.

Ivan Demitriev, it is considered, exercised as much influence upon Russian poesy as Karamzin had effected upon the prose of his language. He was as remarkable for the correctness of his style as for the richness and versatility of his imagination.

Prince Viazemski, Rilejeff (who was executed for his share in the unhappy conspiracy of 1825), Vostokoff, the Slavonic philologist, Khvostoff Batjushkoff, Glinka, and Baron Delwig, whose works were reviewed in the French and English periodicals, are all esteemed as lyrical poets of more or less importance. Baron Rosen was also a very successful translator of Lord Byron, whose works were enthusiastically admired and imitated by Kosloff, who, notwithstanding blindness, lameness, and continued ill-health, dedicated his life to the literature of his country, in which he was eminently successful.

Nareshnoi must not be forgotten in this rapid synopsis of the *litterati* who distinguished themselves at that particular period. He is the author of "Bursack," a Malo-Russian tale. This work is a kind of Russian "Gil Blas."

The first expedition of the Russians round the world was undertaken in the year 1803; and the travels of Admirals Krusenstern, Wrangel, Lazareff, and Captain Golownin say much for the enterprise and honour of Russia and her sons. The voyages into China of Timovsky are already known and valued in England, by means of a translation. Bronevski and Muravieff fully explored the Caucasus and Taurida,—the result of which is several volumes, replete with the most valuable information; while Bitchourin has given one of the best accounts extant of Thibet and the country of the Mongols and Tatars.

Martinoff excelled in his translations of the classics; and the "Jerusalem" of Tasso, the "Æneid," and "Iliad" were successively and successfully rendered into Russian by Vojekoff, Gneditch, and Mertzjakoff. It was then, too, that Ivan Kriloff became so deservedly popular as a fabulist. There is an air of nature, a sweetness about his works, that is not often found elsewhere. He was also acknowledged to have been the best speaker of his time of the Russian language, and has even been styled the Russian "La Fontaine." He has also been translated into German, French, and Italian.

The Russian genius has lately turned its attention to memoirs; and those of the Admiral Shishkoff—before alluded to, in the Caramzin controversy,—of Count Munich, of Prince Shahovskoi, and of the Lieutenant-General Michailovski Danilevski, the author of the "History of the Modern Wars of Russia," are all of interest to the general reader, and form of themselves valuable additions to the libraries of any European nation.

We now come to the time when Alexander Pushkin, the brightest genius of Russian poetical literature, had arrived at the zenith of his reputation, and stood, as he has since done, unrivalled and alone. He was born in 1798, and he died violently in the flower of his days, at the early age of 37,—the victim of domestic unhappiness and of a terrible duel. Pushkin acquired his education at one of the Imperial Institutes. At the very outset of his career, a production which he thought proper to bring before the public, and which was conceived with too much latitude of sentiment, procured his removal from St. Petersburg. He was, however, employed by the government officially, in the southern provinces of the empire, to which he was banished; and there can be no doubt that his genius became tinctured, and probably more developed, by the wild scenery and poetical influence of the semi-civilised regions in which he sojourned. In the meanwhile the present august ruler of the Russias had placed the diadem of the Czars upon his brow, and the imprudent poet was recalled. But the advent of the emperor to the throne had taken place amidst an armed insurrection, and his Majesty felt, that to bulwark the Russias from foreign revolutionary example, the most legitimate and politic steps would be to bring her back to the full appreciation of her own old Muscovite nationality.

The elevated and the educated classes who had so long been accustomed to look to France, England, and Germany for their sentiments, opinions, manners, and even for their language, had almost forgotten that they were Russians, in Russia. Between those higher phases of society and the masses an impassable gulf then existed: a more insurmountable one, indeed, than ever had been before, or since, for its peculiarly antagonistic form was the utter absence of the remotest sympathy between the classes: the higher ones appearing in fact, as if

they were mere "sojourners in the land" of the Muscovite "people."

Pushkin had ever been remarkable for the nationality of his effusions, though he had also evinced in them a spirit of restlessness, and a yearning after a vague independence, which seems to have even actuated him personally in the earlier and more stormy period of his brilliant career. The literary efforts born of this influence possessed a double character, for they were at the same time national and individual, and reflected the tendencies of Russian genius, and the individuality of Pushkin, and the poets who followed so enthusiastically in his steps:—the effervescence of wild and uncontrolled passion, the pursuit of an impossible ideal—the worship of an indefinite and unknown liberalism, by turns opposed or gained the ascendancy over the calm, measured, and hitherto acknowledged tone of Russian literary feeling. The fiery genius of Lermontoff was the first that identified in his own writings this dangerous tendency of the school of Pushkin, which found its last representative in the literary efforts of a young contemporary poet, Maikoff. Towards the latter end of his life, and even at the period of his reappearance in the literary circles of the metropolis, Pushkin, whose taste had been refined by study and experience, would fain have led back the national taste he had misled, to the more sober and classic path from which he had originally lured it with the perilous glitter of his own surpassing talent; but it was too late: the fascination of his style had taken too deep a root in the hearts of the young writers of the day, who would soon have transformed what had been the self-possessed and sober Russian muse into a wild and licentious Bacchante. The emperor, in his wisdom—fearful of her doing herself and others, perhaps, an injury—confined her as closely to her home as was possible—the Russian heart—her proper dwelling place, to the revival of old Russian

nationality. The most rigorous measures were adopted, even to the restriction of the absence of the wanderer from his Russian fatherland, to five years at the furthest, the institution of a severe censorship, and the interruption of the study of philosophy throughout the empire; though when safe from foreign propagandism, and within the *cordon sanitaire* of the protected interior, the grand work of general national progress continued with unabated vigour. Of the exalted opinions of these enthusiasts the only one tolerated by the government was the idea of Panslavism—that is, the incorporation into one vast whole of all the races of Slavonic origin.

Alexander Pushkin was by this time highly patronised by his present Majesty, Nicholas I., and had been promoted to the honourable position of Imperial Historiographer for his laudable endeavours to repress the evil he had so powerfully, and perhaps unwittingly, induced; for his devotion to the cause of nationality, at that time so particularly encouraged by the government; and for his unequalled genius. But the chastened style of Pushkin wanted in power and originality what it gained in purity and legitimacy. He had harnessed his Pegasus to the car of expediency, and it had lost the use of its wings, if not the freedom of its action. It will only be necessary here to say that some of his works exist in manuscript, and are, for political reasons, preserved in the imperial cabinet, whilst we give the titles of a few of his most admired productions that have been published. “The Captive of the Mountains,” a scene of Caucasian history; “The Fountain of Backtschiserai,” a tale of Tartary; “The Captain’s Daughter,” and “Russlan and Ludmilla,” from the semi-mythic and heroic legends of Old Russia, are all written in verse, and possess extreme beauty. It cannot be denied that Pushkin was much biassed in his style by the study of Byron; but he was no mere imitator of that gifted Englishman. “Jevjeni Onegin,” or

the life of *un homme blasé*, was the name of a novel in verse, which shortly after his return to fashionable life was published by him, and which added greatly to his reputation. His principal tragedy was "Boris Godunoff," from a remarkable page in Russian history. The last work of Alexander Pushkin was the "Istoria Bunta," or the history of the "Insurrection of Pugatcheff." The death of Pushkin was caused by a duel at St. Petersburg, soon after his marriage, in 1835, when he fell a victim to jealousy and the machinations of others.

Nicholas Gogol now appeared in the literary firmament, with the power and the intention to direct the genius of his country towards the new goal—nationality,—and to this end he strove to awaken afresh the interest that the Russians had been taught to feel in their own character as a people. Gogol made it his study to examine and analyse Russian life in all its phases; and, it was not long ere, by his instrumentality, a succession of romances and comedies, based upon the actual state of society, took precedence of the many works that would have perpetuated the fiery and dangerous inspirations of Pushkin, and of his school. This influence was so powerful and its effects so successful, that when the revolution took place in 1848 there was but one tendency throughout the entire field of Muscovite literature—namely, nationality.

Nicholas Gogol is distinguished from the other authors of his nation by a faculty of analysis and a creative power, rarely found united in the same individual. He is equally at home when painting outward and visible objects, with a graphic *verve* and sharpness of outline that is positively lifelike and startling; or when he applies his extraordinary talent to the innermost and secret phenomena of the human heart. His style is original and delightful: his passages of the most biting satire are followed by sudden bursts of tenderness, with an impulsiveness and nature

altogether peculiar to the Slavonic genius. Milóukoff, in his history of Russian poetry—and himself a critic of some celebrity—says of Gogol, while contrasting him with Pushkin and Lermontoff:

“Pushkin inveighed against men from pride and egotism: Lermontoff, as it were, cursed them in the cynicism of his despair: Gogol, on the contrary, weeps over them, and suffers inwardly, even when, to the superficial observer, he may seem to be most amused at their vices and follies.”

? “There are indeed, in many portions of his writings, a great resemblance to the style of the English Sterne; and his poem, “The Adventures of Tchichikoff,” or, “The Dead Souls,”* since the year 1846 has seen its third edition.

The melancholy fate of Alexander Bestushev should at least entitle him to a notice in this list of distinguished men of letters. He was a subaltern officer in the guard, and, like his friend and fellow-poet Rileyev, was fatally committed in the conspiracy of 1825. He was tried, found guilty, and sent to Siberia, having, of course, been previously deprived of his nobility. Afterwards, however, and through the interest of the Miloradovitch family, his sentence was commuted to service as a common soldier, in that portion of the Russian army then actively employed in the Caucasus. In this disadvantageous position, by dint of sheer merit and gallantry, he again won his epaulets, and soon after died bravely by the bullets of the Tcherkessian mountaineers. He was the author of a highly-talented synopsis of Russian literature, and the editor of a very popular periodical, “*Severnaja Swesda*,” the “Polar Star.” He afterwards wrote under the name of Marlinski; and his Cossack tales, and sketches of Siberia and the Caucasus, as well as his novels, are written with a

* The Russian peasants, or serfs, are familiarly called *dushi*, or “souls.”

freshness and spirit that are charming. His style has been likened to that of Spindler, the German novelist, and his contemporary.

Historical romance is a very favourite study among the Russian *literati*. I can at present remember only Galitsch, Laschetnikoff, Skobelev, Degoureff, Prince Odojevski, Veltman, Dahl, who gives his works to the public under the *sobriquet* of Cossack Luganski; Grebenka, celebrated for his humorous sketches of Malo-Russia; Gautharoff, formidable for the keenness of his satire; Grigorovitch, the novelist of the fields and the peasantry, among whose best works I may name "Antony the Wretched," and "The Poor Devil;" and Boutkoff, the life-like delineator of the social state and habits of the lower classes of his countrymen. By the force of talent and perseverance, Boutkoff raised himself from the very class which he paints so ably, and to the amelioration and advancement of whose moral position, to his honour be it said, he has dedicated his genius. Tourgenieff also should be mentioned, as having stepped down from the elegiac mood to go with the current of the common tendency in favour of romance literature. The scenes of his creations are almost all laid in the country and the provinces; and his best work in that *genre*, "The Recollections of a Sportsman," will be found in every Russian library.

There are many names that no doubt merit insertion under the head of this species of literature; but we have already transgressed too far upon the usual dimensions of a preface, and we will at once therefore proceed to the works of Count W. Solohoupe, the most distinguished and elegant writer that Russia can boast of at the present day.

It was only in 1841 that the Count Solohoupe entered decidedly into the arena of letters; but the greater part of the *historiettes* written by him, and published under the name of "Na-

son Griadutchi" ("The Narcotic"—or, more literally, "To Cause Sleep"), had already been enthusiastically received in private; and they were equally applauded, when given to the world, by the public at large. His next important work is the "Tarantass," (which means a kind of large and commodious country travelling carriage, much used in the interior of Russia); "Ytchera i Segdonia" or, "Yesterday and To-day," and the "Sotrudniki" ("Confederates,") which we believe to be the latest of his works, published as late as 1851.

We cannot here enter into a review of the works of this author, but we will merely add, that alike in the "Tarantass," which is full of deep and manly thought upon the mighty resources and destinies of his country, and in the "Narcotic," which is the lightest of his productions—indeed throughout every thing he has written, there is a *melange* of keen observation, solid depth, and serious patriotism, of aristocratic *finesse*, humour, irony, and acute sensibility.

The ladies, on the other hand, have shown by their efforts their willingness and power to further the cause of Russian *belles lettres*. The names of Mesdames Pauloff, Panaieff, Teplef, Bunin, the Princess Yolhonski, and Helene Hahn, who has been compared, and not without reason, to Madame Dudevant (George Sand), are all celebrated; nor must the Countess Rostopchin be forgotten, who has at once cultivated the bright fields of poetry and romance. The works of this lady are distinguished by the elevation of sentiment that pervades them, by the easy and artistic style with which they are sustained throughout, and by the fine and delicate womanly feeling that gives them their principal charm. The eminent success of this gifted lady is clearly accounted for, however, when we recollect that she is the authoress of a most elegant little poem, the subject of which is "How a Woman should Write."

The Russian drama has made rapid and brilliant progress since the beginning of this century. The works of Shakspeare and Schiller have of course served as models, and their master-pieces have long since been successfully translated and performed in Russian: and if England can boast of a Kemble, a Macready, and a Vandenhoff, Russia has every reason to be proud of her Karatigin, and Machaloff. The stage also now begins to assume a more decided and national character, for of late years such pieces and operas as "Askoldova Migala" ("The Tomb of Askold") and "Russlan and Ludmilla," of which the subject and music are essentially Russian, have been brought out. In comedy, Russia is very fertile; and among the latest productions we may mention the "Gore ot Uma," or, "The Troubles of the Intellect," by Griboedoff, and one or two others by Gogol, of first-rate talent, which depict Russian society to the life. The "Svoi Ludi-sothemsa" or, "We are all Friends and shall Settle between Ourselves," of A. Ostrovski, delineating the habits, manners, and opinions of the Moscovite merchant class (a very peculiar one indeed), [is most graphic and caustic. Turgenieff is also the author of two very charming comedies, which have met with the most ample success. Polevoi, the eminent critic and distinguished editor of the *Telegraph*, has given to the stage many excellent tragic and comic pieces, most of which have been well received; while Fedoroff, Levski, and others have furnished many more; and last but not least, must be mentioned both Glinka and Kukolnick, whose talents as dramatists are of the very highest order.

But it must be admitted that the empire has not yet produced a great tragic author; and though her store of theatrical compositions is very ample, yet it is not so select as those she possesses in history, poetry, and romance. Nevertheless, it is to be hoped that a great creative genius will soon arise, who will do that for the drama which Pushkin, Lermontoff,

and Gogol have done for even less attractive branches of literature.

It cannot also but be admitted that the greatest possible facilities have ever been and are still afforded to the development of dramatic talent in every form. During the reign of his late Majesty, Alexander, and at present under Nicholas the First, the theatres and the artistes of St. Petersburg and Moscow have been encouraged by the immediate imperial patronage, and are amply salaried from the privy purse. In illustration of this imperial munificence, I subjoin an account of the different professional persons who were included in the management of the Imperial Theatres at St. Petersburg during the year 1850.

	Male.	Female.	Total.
Actors	374	199	573
Actresses* and ladies of the Corps de Ballet	—	320	320
Pupils of the Dramatic Academy	70	95	165
Musicians	369	202	571
Chorus	72	48	120
Employés, workmen, and supernumeraries	475	260	735

During the season at St. Petersburg, which continues the whole of the winter, the inhabitants and visitors may choose their amusements between the Italian, German and Russian operas, the Russian and French plays, or the ballet, for there are always from three to four foreign dramatic *corps* in that superb city at this time, and, without even the exception of Sunday, the performances take place every evening at each of the Imperial Theatres in rotation.

If we turn to the consideration of historical science in Russia, we find that the archæological commission was opened in 1834, and

* *Actresses*.—Under this head are included the ladies who perform in the *poses plastiques*, which, together with concerts, are given during Lent, and consist principally of historical representations.

the libraries of France, England, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and other countries were visited at the imperial expense and ransacked for data and information; and the first five volumes of Russian annals passed through the press in 1844. This institution, in conjunction with the historical and geographical societies of Moscow and St. Petersburg, met with such success in these researches, as threw considerable light upon many portions of Russian history, and added a fresh impetus to the pens of the scientific and imaginative writers of the day.

Professor Ustraloff published in 1839 his "History of Russia," in which the theory of Pan Slavism was developed in a novel and masterly manner. Its leading object is to represent the Russian empire as the natural and central head of all the races of Slavonic origin. This is a work of considerable importance, and was translated into German in 1840, one year only after its publication.

Nadeshkin, too, wrote a book of decided interest to the Russian public, entitled, "Treatise on the Geography of the Old Russian World," in which it was sought to trace the seats of the ancient Slavonic nations, and with very much the same tendency as the work of Ustraloff.

Professor Kupffer, of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, made a voyage through the Ural, and published the results of his observations in 1833. Schurovsky visited the same regions, and wrote an historical and statistical work in the year 1846.

Hyacinth Bitchourin, the priest, and others still continue their useful researches among the wild Mongols and Thibetians. The Government has lately caused to be written, the "History of the Commerce with Persia and Turkey," by the Councillor of State, Von Hagemeister, the same who paid a scientific visit to the Great Exhibition of 1851. And Chaudoir, encouraged by the same patronage, wrote his celebrated "Numismatics of China, Corea,

and Japan." Both these works are published at the same time in the Russian and French languages.

In statistics, Constantine Arsenieff stands pre-eminent: his last work was published in 1848. But the works of Pallas, printed as early as 1771, of Krashennnikoff, Lepechin, Richkoff, Tihhatcheff, and others are still considered the standard authorities.

Among the most approved historical novelists may be mentioned Bulgarin, Puschkareff, Swinin, Massolski, Zagoskin, and many more. It need hardly be observed that the history of their own country was the never-failing source from which they drew their inspiration and their subjects. Jevjeni Grebenka and Kvitka have written humorous romances in the Malo-Russian dialect, with a view to its cultivation; and the intention is most praiseworthy, if only for the wealth of Slavonic popular poetry, which is scattered over the Ukraine and Malo-Russia in general; indeed, wherever the Ruthenian tribes have wandered for a time or settled definitely.

In addition to the list of distinguished philological orientalists already enumerated, a number of others of considerable talent have arisen of late years; but the limits of a preface have already been so unmercifully abused, that instead of proceeding further, we will apologise to the reader for this apparently unnecessary amplification, and at once dismiss the subject with one last observation with regard to the social position of those who profess literature in Russia.

All men, whether belonging to the fourteen classes of nobility or not, must follow a profession, or devote their time to the service of the empire, by attaching themselves to the army, the diplomatists, or the governmental offices. No amount of personal wealth or talent can absolve the individual from this moral duty to society and to the state. Peter the Great, indeed, enacted a most positive law to that effect, and though the edict may have

fallen by the lapse of time into disuetude in its judicial capacity, its spirit still exists in full force. The "*dolce far niente*" existence of utter idleness and caprice, peculiar to the wealthy and the "*men of pleasure*" of Western Europe, is utterly unknown in Russia; and the man who, in full possession of his health, strength, and faculties, would attempt to brave public opinion on this point, would soon find himself treated by society, in return, with the slightest possible consideration; and it is only during the hours snatched from the study or practice of a profession that the pen, in a literary sense, can be employed. The pursuit of literature as a profession, and as the sole object of life, would indeed be considered as something utterly inadmissible. And one of the results of the severe discipline thus prevalent in Russian society, is, that the class of literary adventurers so common unhappily everywhere at present—the "*free lances*," or rather "*free pens*" in the war of letters, the men who are so appositely and graphically called by the French the "*Bohémiens littéraires*"—are in Russia entirely unknown.

True genius, on the other hand, in that country, to a certainty marks its fortunate possessor for honour and advancement. It has ever been thus, but more particularly since the days of Peter the Czar; and he was even surpassed in this by Catharine II., till, during her splendid reign, it became the point of high and jealous ambition among the mighty of the land to be considered as the patrons of literature and the fine arts in general, and of those gifted men to whom the world was indebted for them.

It is the same in the present day; and it is only necessary for the individual, in whatever profession he may have embarked, to evince unmistakable proofs of decided and genuine talent, to find his road to preferment and position ready traced for him through life. In exemplification of this principle, which redounds so much to the honour of the Imperial Court and the Government, it is

only needful to state, that Karamsin occupied a post of great honour and importance; that Diershavin (the Muscovite Jean Baptiste Rousseau) was Minister of Justice, and Dmitrieff Minister of State; that Joukovski, the elegiac poet, was chosen to a post no less honourable and responsible than that of directing the education of the heir-apparent to the diadem of all the Russias; that Griboedoff was made Ambassador to the Court of the Shah—where he was unfortunately assassinated by an infuriated mob; that Arsenieff Joukovski Schiskoff and a host of others still occupy certain high offices of the empire most ably, and that the Count Solohoupe is at this present moment most probably, as he has been for some time, one of the chamberlains to his Imperial Majesty, Nicholas I.

CAUCASIAN TALES.

CHAPTER I.

KHALILA.

I WAS travelling in the autumn of 184—, post haste from Tiflis. All the baggage I had in my *telega**—for I am an old traveller—consisted of a small portmanteau, into which I had packed a considerable number of travelling sketches—literary and pictorial, and general descriptions of Georgia, Tscherkessia, and the Caucasus generally. The greater portion of these memoranda were lost, whilst I succeeded in preserving the modest valise, and the few necessary articles of toilet and wardrobe it contained.

The evening sun had commenced his descent behind the snow-capped mountain-chains that loomed around in lofty grandeur, when I entered upon the broad plain of Koishaoursk. My *yamtschik* † was relentlessly urging on his wretched horses, in his anxiety to arrive at the Koishaoursk mountain-station, which was our next resting place, and where food and shelter awaited us and our jaded cattle, before the closing in of night. He was lustily singing a wild mountain ditty, and startling the echoes of the deserts we were traversing. What a beautiful place is that same plain of Koishaoursk! It is surrounded on all sides by impassable and stupendous elevations, rocks of a ferruginous and reddish hue, scattered in chaotic confusion in all

* A light open travelling-carriage or cart without springs.

† Driver of the *telega*.

directions, in some places quite hidden in creeping ivy and other parasitical plants, and crowned with dark masses of trees of the fir and larch species, intersected by streaks of the brightest possible yellow, the sand which the violent tempests and rains from the mountains had swept down at different periods upon the valleys. Far before us the proud summits of those elevated ranges, glowed as if with fire, from the dazzling reflection of the setting sun upon those eternal snows that crested them; below us, the rapid Aragva, near its confluence, with a smaller and nameless river, burst noisily forth from a sombre cavern, like a silver serpent,—like that reptile writhing and turning in its brilliant sinuosities far away into the distance.

Arriving at last at the foot of the steep mountain of Koishaursk, we halted at the station. About twenty mountaineers—Georgians, Ossetians, and others, armed, and sinister-looking boors—were there before us, and were noisily wrangling among themselves. They were attached to a caravan of camels which they were now preparing to put up for the night.

I was compelled here to hire draught-oxen to convey my light *telega* up this formidable hill, for the season was already considerably advanced, and the road was in many places covered with ice.

What was to be done? I engaged six powerful oxen, and several Ossetians, scarcely less savage, to take charge of them and of my baggage. They did their duty by shouts and howls, rather than by exertion.

Immediately behind us four oxen were engaged in drawing another *telega*, but, to my great surprise, they appeared to do so with the greatest ease, and as if, indeed, it contained little or nothing, though it was, on the contrary, crammed and packed to the very top. This phenomenon naturally attracted my attention. This *telega* was slowly followed on foot by its proprietor,

smoking leisurely from a short Kabardian pipe, profusely ornamented with silver. He wore a military undress surtout, without epaulets, and a handsome Tscherkessian fur-cap. He appeared a tall stout man, of perhaps fifty years of age, erect and soldier-like; the dark and bronzed colour of his weather-beaten countenance affirmed its long acquaintance and exposure to the Trans-Caucasian sun; and the premature greyness of his closely-cropped hair and heavy mustaches, was not exactly in consonance with his firm step and robust appearance. I paused till he came up, and then saluted him; he returned my bow in grave silence, and by emitting an immense cloud of smoke that would almost have done credit to the funnel of a steam-boat.

"We are fellow-travellers, sir, it would appear?" said I.

He silently saluted me again.

"You are, no doubt, on your road to Stavropole?" I continued.

"Just so—exactly—" was the curt response.

"With crown property?" I ventured to suggest.

"Just so."

This was not particularly inviting. Nothing dismayed, however, I thus again returned to the attack.

"Pray, sir, can you tell me how it happens that four oxen are, I perceive, easily conveying your very heavily-loaded carriage, whilst six animals, and with the assistance of those vociferous gentlemen, the drivers, can scarcely move on at all, with my comparatively empty conveyance?"

He slightly smiled, and answered, while significantly looking at me—

"You are, no doubt, but a new arrival here in the Caucasus?"

"About a year," was my reply.

He smiled again.

"You smile, sir," said I.

"Just so, sir; exactly. These semi-Asiatic people are the greatest scoundrels on the face of the earth! Now, you fancy, they are helping, no doubt, because they are making this infernal noise? The devil, indeed, only knows why they are shouting, and I dare say he won't tell. The oxen, perhaps, understand them. I don't believe any Christian man possibly could. Why, you may depend upon it, not one of them will move faster than it pleases; for that very reason, that it is a standing compact between the brutes, quadruped and otherwise. They are incorrigible blackguards! and it is, indeed, difficult to deal with them. They always impose upon a traveller, and generally succeed. You will find that they will even have the assurance, notwithstanding, to ask you for a *na vodka*.* But I know the villains well; they will not attempt the game with me! I assure you."

"And you, sir, if I may inquire,—is it long since you have served here?"

"Yes, I was already quartered here under the General Alexey Petrovitch Ermoloff,"† replied he, with an air of something like importance. "When he joined the line, I was lieutenant," he added; "during his command, however, I gained two steps in rank, in our numerous affairs with the mountaineers."

"And you are now stationed in this neighbourhood?" I demanded.

"Just so; exactly. I am attached now to the third reserve infantry battalion. And you, sir—may I ask? are you a civil officer of the government?"

* A small coin to purchase a dram.

† The Russians have the custom of addressing and speaking of one another by the Christian name of the individual and that of his father: thus Alexey Petrovitch Ermoloff means simply Alexis Ermoloff, the son of Peter Ermoloff. This will account for the long compound names throughout this work.

I said, "I," &c. &c. &c.; and thereupon, dear reader, I proceeded to tell my military acquaintance as much of my affairs as I thought fit, which was not much; and as he did not seem more edified or interested in the recital than I suppose you would be, were I to tell you, egotism shall not tempt me into fatiguing you with my personal history.

Thus commenced our acquaintance, and for the time terminated our conversation, and, following one another, we silently continued our journey. On approaching the summit of the mountain our progress was considerably impeded by the accumulation of snow. The sun had now set, and night had suddenly followed upon its disappearance, as it invariably happens where twilight is almost unknown; but, thanks to the reflection from the immense surface of snow, we could, without much difficulty, discern our path, which still led on higher towards the mountain crest, though not in a very steep direction. I ordered my portmanteau to be now thrown into the *telega*, and the oxen to be again exchanged for the horses; and, for the last time, I turned round to gaze once more upon the plain stretched below us. A grey fog, issuing in dense masses from among the deep chasms and gullies on the mountains, was now rapidly covering the whole view, and not even a solitary sound could reach our ears from the valley below. This solemn silence did not, however, extend to our elevated regions, for I was surrounded by the Ossetian bullock-drivers clamouring for an absurd sum beyond their hire; but my new friend, the Schtabz-Capitan, emphatically interfered, and dispersed them with very little ceremony.

"What an infernal people!" said he; "they do not even know how to ask for bread in the Russian language; but they have all somehow learned to say: 'Officer, give us a *na vodka*!' I like the Tatars better; they are at least not drunkards and thieves."

We were now, perhaps, about a mile from the next station. All around was very still—almost painfully silent. On our left we saw a black and deep ravine; behind, and immediately before us, the dark-blue summits of the mountains, their rugged peaks standing in bold relief against the sky, and covered with virgin snow, piled as wildly as though Titans had heaped them one upon another, and stretching far away towards the pale horizon, still preserving a last and faint reflection from the dying glow of the departed sun. Here and there a few stars began to glimmer in the firmament; but they appeared to me to be far more distant from our poor world than in the north. Both sides of our lonely road were strewn with black and rugged rocks, and in all directions the tops of mountain shrubs were peeping forth from under their heavy draperies of snow; but the silence was very oppressive—not the chirp of a bird or the fall of a leaf was to be heard in the midst of this death-like slumber of nature; it was even a relief to hear at intervals the snorting and whinnying of our wearied horses, and the occasional and irregular tinkling of the bells, which, according to our Russian fashion, were fastened to our *troikas*.*

“We shall, I think, have a fine day to-morrow!” I observed.

Sohtabz-Capitan made no reply to my suggestion, but pointed significantly with his finger towards a lofty mountain of remarkable and irregular form, which was towering in its dusky magnitude before us.

“What do you mean?” I demanded.

“The Gutte-mountain.”

“Well, sir, and what then?”

“Do you not perceive how it smokes?” asked my companion.

“You would take it at this distance for a volcanic effect; but

* A Telega, but drawn by three horses.

when the Gutte-mountain pulls at his pipe as lustily as he does to-night, we old Circassians know it means mischief."

And of a verity this Gutte-mountain was obviously emitting smoke, but in reality a dense fog from its craggy sides; light heaps of vaporous clouds were floating all around it—whilst its top was entirely hidden in a dark tempest cloud, so black and palpable, indeed, that it appeared like a spot or patch on the darkening heavens.

We could, however, fortunately, already discover the post-house and its surrounding dwellings and out-buildings, and we saw before us the inviting glimmer of the fires in the windows, when we were suddenly overtaken by a damp cold wind, which came moaning down the ravine, laden with a fine penetrating rain which plentifully bedewed us. I scarcely had time enough to throw my *bourka** round my shoulders, when it also began to snow in right earnest. I turned for information towards my taciturn friend the captain, who, from his long services in the Caucasus, was of course accustomed to and enabled to pronounce upon the elementary phenomena of these elevated regions.

"We shall be compelled to bivouac in this dog-hole for the night, I fear," said the soldier, in evident disappointment. "In such weather as this it would be utterly impossible to pass the mountains."

"You drivers there!" he exclaimed suddenly, addressing our half-frozen charioteers: "were there any snow-slips from the Cross-mountain? Another pleasant feature that," he added, "of this charming country!"

"No, Schtabz-Capitan, none have come down that I have heard of yet," replied the Ossetian; "but we shall, I fear, find many hanging over our heads further on,—a great many—and ripe for falling too."

* A Caucasian felt cloak.

The station had no rooms or accommodation of any kind for travellers; we were therefore obliged to put up with the shelter of a smoky hut. I was fortunately, however, enabled to invite my fellow-traveller to drink a *glass of tea** with me, for I was too old a traveller not to have provided myself with a metal tea-pot of the most approved fashion, and which I can fairly affirm to have been my only creature-comfort during my travels in most of the inhospitable regions of the Caucasus.

This wretched hut was so contrived as to lean, as it were, with one side against the face of the rock: three slippery and dilapidated steps led from its entrance. I entered by stooping almost double, and while feeling my way in utter darkness I suddenly fell over a cow,—which rather disagreeably informed me that with these amiable people the stable constitutes a portion of the entrance hall. I did not know whither to turn, as on one side of me I heard the lowing of calves; on the other the plaintive cries of sheep and other animals, mingled with the barking of dogs. Fortunately for me, however, my researches in natural history were cut short by the advent of a faint and glimmering light, which helped me to discover another aperture, which was certainly not very unlike the door of a civilized habitation. And here a very interesting *tableau* presented itself before me. The large hut, the sloping roof of which was supported upon two pillars fixed, not too firmly, in the ground, was full of people. In the middle of it a blazing fire of huge logs was noisily burning on the ground; but the dense smoke, driven violently back by the wind from the numerous holes in the roof, was spreading all over the place, and in such quantity and quality, that for a considerable time I was unable to open my eyes at all,—far less to look around me. This cheerful fireside was surrounded by

* The lower and middle classes in Russia drink tea from tumblers.

several witch-like looking women, a number of half-naked children, a miserable ragged old Georgian, and some half-starved dogs. Still all this could not be helped; hence I followed the example of the philosophic veteran, my travelling companion, and so, drawing closer to the fire, we lit our pipes, and shortly after our patience was rewarded by the pleasant song of our tea-kettle, which was by this time gaily boiling.

"Poor wretches!" said I to the old officer, while pointing to our squalid hosts, who were silently staring at us with mixed wonder and respect.

"Stupid animals," replied he: "they are fit for nothing else; they understand nothing, they are good for nothing, not even for the smallest suspicion of civilisation! Our Kabardians or Tscherkessians are far different: I like them far better, though they are thieves from their cradles, poor devils,—they are at least courageous, that there is no denying. These vermin here have no taste even for arms: why, you will not find a tolerably good *kinjal** among the whole gang of them. They are truly a despicable set of hounds."

"Have you been long quartered in Tscherkessia?" I demanded, after a pause.

"Yes, I was stationed for a long time—about ten years indeed, with my company in the old fortress, near the Stony-Fort. Do you know it?"

"I have heard of it," I replied.

"Ah! that was the place—and those were the days, my friend," continued the Schtabz-Capitan, "that we were harassed; almost to death, by these Circassian thieves I was mentioning just now. Now-a-days, thank God! matters are much quieter; but I can remember the time well when it required a sergeant's

* A broad and somewhat long dagger worn by the Circassians.

guard to cut a cabbage outside the walls, though right under the very guns of the fort; and if you ventured a hundred yards from the fortification, you could count for certain that somewhere or another one of those wild hairy devils was looking out for you. And only be accidentally delayed for an instant after the escort, and then look sharp for your head—either you felt the sling of a *lasso* round your wind-pipe, or an ounce of lead was lodged in some part of your person. Still, I must own, they are fine fellows; and if they are as wicked as the devil, they certainly have his courage.”

“You must have seen a great deal in your time, and must yourself have had many adventures?” said I, with increasing curiosity.

“How should I have gone through these scenes and not have had some?—to be sure I had.”

But here he began abstractedly to twist his left mustache, drooped his head upon his broad chest, and sunk into reflection. For the life of me I could not rouse him from it, yet I was anxious to get a story out of him somehow,—a desire so very natural to every traveller. In the meantime, however, our tea was ready, and smoking in our glasses. I now produced from my portmanteau sundry other little travelling comforts. I arranged them on our miserable table, and placed them before my taciturn fellow-traveller. He tasted the tea, and said, as if speaking to himself, and still dwelling in utter absence of mind on my last observation: “To be sure I had!” This exclamation gave me great hope. I well know that the old veterans of the Caucasus love to chat and talk as much as others,—perhaps more so, from the reason, that they have so seldom an opportunity for the indulgence. Many an officer lies with his company or his detachment for five years at a time in some lonely fort or remote stronghold; and during the entire period of those five years, pro-

bably neither relative nor friend will travel to the far Caucasus to give him a friendly "*how are you;*" the more so, perhaps, that the military etiquette of salutation is, "*I wish your Glory good health.*" And much, indeed, could be related of these barbarous provinces, their magnificent scenery and their people. Wild and interesting, indomitable in their pride, obstinacy, and resolution, every day spent among them is replete with adventure and with danger. Little, indeed, is known or published concerning the Caucasus and her wild inhabitants.

"You would, perhaps, like to add a little brandy?" said I to my companion. "I have here some excellent pale brandy from Tiflis. Besides, it is getting cold now."

"No, sir, I thank you, I never touch spirits," was the answer.

"How is that?" said I: "an old soldier, and a water-drinker?"

"Just so, exactly. I have sworn never to taste strong liquors again. You seem surprised, however?"

"I am, indeed," I answered. "I must confess you have fairly raised my curiosity!"

"Indeed, it is no secret," said the grim old Schtabz-Capitan, "and it occurred thus:—I was then but a simple lieutenant. I and some of my comrades had been drinking hard all night on some festive occasion; and during that time, and I suppose while under the influence of this same brandy, we quarrelled among ourselves, and created a serious disturbance. Swords were drawn and threats were exchanged. No particular mischief was done, but for the time everything like military discipline and etiquette was forgotten, and I myself was as lively, perhaps, or more so, than any of my brother officers; but the consequences were serious—in an army constituted like ours, it could not but be so. We were in for it rarely, I promise you, when old Alexey Petrovitch heard of it. God have mercy upon us, how savage the old mar-

tinnet was ! We narrowly escaped being brought to a court-martial. But still it was quite natural for young men, such as we were then—particularly under the circumstances, and in our peculiar service too. Imagine a year or more without seeing a strange face, or hearing news of any kind : and if after such a lapse of time, you meet with old friends, good comrades, and better wine,—you are a lost man ! Since that time, however, I have, as you perceive, forsworn the temptation and strong drink for ever.”

Hearing this, I nearly lost all hope of opening the veteran’s heart with a cork-screw.

“With the Tscherkesses, however, it is quite different,” continued he. “At their weddings and funerals, or indeed any occasion that affords an excuse for it, as soon as they are drunk from *bousa*,* their fun commences—that is, their sabring, slashing, and maiming. I once nearly lost my life myself through these Circassian amiabilities, though I was the guest of a friendly prince at the time—Kerim-Baba-Ogli.”

“How did this happen,” said I, “if I may inquire?”

“Just so, exactly,” was my new friend’s inevitable answer, which, by the way, together with his pipe, seemed to be always in his mouth. The said pipe was again filled, re-lit, and the old soldier began to relate as follows :—

“I was stationed at the time with my detachment in a lonely fortress on the other side of the Terek : it must be at least now five years ago. It was in the autumn, when a provision convoy arrived at the garrison. The officer commanding the escort was a fine elegant young fellow of about twenty-five years of age. He delivered his despatches and waited upon me in full uniform, telling me, with an especial air of *nonchalance*, that he was, he *believed*, to remain with me in the fortress, till further orders. He was so very slender, young, and fair-complexioned; the uniform

* An intoxicating malt drink of the Caucasus.

he wore was so very new, and so carefully fitted and put on, that I at once guessed, without difficulty, that he was a new recruit for our solitary service, and an entirely fresh fish in the Caucasus ; and that it was most probably, *en penitence*, that he was recommended the salubrity of the mountain air.

“ ‘ You are welcome ! ’ said I to him ; ‘ and you are, no doubt, transferred to us from Russia ? ’

“ ‘ The despatches will tell you as much, no doubt, Schtabz-Capitan,’ was his cool reply. I took him by the hand, however, kindly, and I said to him, ‘ I am very glad to see you ; very glad, indeed, for good comrades are always welcome. But you will find us a little lonely here. I am, however, your superior officer, and I will make you as comfortable as I can. I will live with you on friendly terms when off duty ; and from this time, pray, call me simply Sergey Antonovitch. And what on earth do you mean by this full uniform ? Uncase, by all means ; and, young gentleman, except on duty, dress as you please.’ He yawned languidly, and thanked me with the utmost indifference, and was shown to his quarters, but he soon began to settle himself in the fortress, and adapt himself to his fortune.’

“ Pray, what was his name ? ” asked I of the captain.

“ He was called Fedor Romanovitch Zadonskoi ; and notwithstanding all this he was a very excellent young fellow, and a good soldier to boot, I can assure you ; but certainly a little eccentric in his manners. It was long before I could understand him perfectly—if I ever did, indeed. Sometimes, for instance, he would be out shooting for whole days and nights at a time ; and that, too, in defiance of the most inclement weather, till nearly frozen to death ; but he cared little for that ; and though in appearance he was so delicate, he possessed a constitution of cast-iron ; and he was ever in extremes. At other times, again, I have known him remain in the fortress for a week, and, though in per-

fect health, sit in his quarters over a fire like a sick girl. If the wind was blowing hard, he was sure to have a cold; and if the shutters were shaken by it, he seemed alarmed and trembling. It was my opinion he had something on his mind. However, he came in and out of my rooms and did just as he pleased. Sometimes he would remain with me for hours in the same attitude without uttering a word; and then again if he began to speak, he could, with a strange kind of hysteric jocularity entirely his own, make you nearly convulsed with laughter. His was a strange character indeed. His talents were of the highest order, and he was, as I have said before, elegant and accomplished: he was good-hearted, too, at bottom: and with all these peculiarities, he must have been also a rich man, for he indulged in the most whimsical and expensive caprices, and possessed vast quantities of baggage, valuables, and trinkets."

"And was he quartered long with you?" asked I again.

"About a year, more or less,—but that was a year of adventure indeed, and it will always remain graven in my recollection. That young man caused me much anxiety, but I do not think less kindly of him for that. And really it would seem that there are people of whom it may be said from their birth, that they are to meet with extraordinary vicissitudes and adventures through their chequered lives."

"Extraordinary! how so?" exclaimed I, with an air of well-feigned surprise and of real curiosity, while pouring some more tea into his glass.

"Well, I will tell you about it. Within two or three miles from the fortress was the insignificant stronghold of a friendly chieftain, Kerim-Baba-Ogli—the same whom I lately mentioned to you. His son, a smart young boy of about fifteen, was in the habit of visiting us daily under some pretext or other. And I must confess that we had really spoiled the lad. But he was

a *thorough* Circassian, ready for anything and everything: he could pick up a *shashka** from under his horse at full speed, and to hit the centre of a target from the saddle was but child's play to him. One thing was not well in the boy; he, in common with all his nation, was singularly covetous of money. Once, I remember, for a joke, Zadonskoi promised to give him an imperial, on condition that he should steal the best goat from his father's flock within a given time,—thieving came naturally to him, I suppose, as to all his race: and what do you think the young rascal did? The following night he dragged a huge patriarch he-goat, bigger than himself, by main strength and by its very horns into the fortress. At other times Fedor Romanovitch would amuse himself by teasing him; then the young rascal's eyes would fill with blood, as it were, and he would lay his hand in savage earnest upon his little *kinjal*. 'Hallô! Abdourza, shall I shorten thee by a head,' I would perhaps say to him. 'May thy head fall in a ready grave!' was his probable answer. He was an untameable young devil.

"The old prince, Kerim-Baba-Ogli, his father (princes are cheap here in the Caucasus), came himself on one occasion to ask us to a wedding. The old man gave away his eldest daughter, and, being old friends as well as neighbours, I could not refuse, you perceive, although the old sinner was a Tscherkess and a heathen, and, like the rest of them, strongly suspected of treachery and an amiable weakness towards brigandage. We set out; Zadonskoi accompanied me. In the *aoul*† we were, as usual in Circassian villages, received by a pack of barking dogs. The women hid themselves before our sight, as a matter of course; and those, indeed, of whom we could catch a sly glimpse were very far from being handsome.

* The Circassian broadsword.

† A Circassian fortified village, as most of them are in the Caucasus.

“‘I certainly had a far brighter idea of Circassian loveliness,’ said Zadonakoi to me.

“‘Wait a little,’ replied I, laughing; ‘you will have a better opportunity of judging by and by, perhaps.’

“The *aoul* of the old chief was already crowded to excess with his numerous kinsmen and guests. These people have, indeed, the primitive custom of inviting all comers and passers-by to their weddings and funerals. We were received with great distinction by all the scoundrels, and led to the place of honour. I, however, took especial care, as usual, to mark the place carefully where our horses were picketed—as experience has taught me that it is always as well to be prepared for any little accident, and more particularly, perhaps, with the gentle shepherds of the Caucasus.”

“And how do these pastoral innocents celebrate their weddings?” asked I of the now talkative veteran.

“Very simply,” answered he. “At the commencement the mollah, a kind of priest, reads to them something from their Koran; then presents of different kinds are exchanged between the young couple and all their relations. They then seriously begin to eat, and to drink their intoxicating *bousa*; and later begins an infernal saraband they call a dance, or rather, in their language, *digitorka*. There may be seen also some poor, dirty, wretched, ragged buffoon, mounted upon a hungry, limping jade of a horse, bending and twisting himself up and down and about like an eel, and striving to make the respectable company smile upon his antics and distortions. When it grows dark, and the drink has done its work, then begins with them what we would call the ball. Some poor old villager is called into requisition, and commences strumming upon a three-stringed—I don’t recollect what the devil they call the machine in their language, but it is a kind of instrument somewhat resembling our Russian





" Zadonskol and I were seated on the place of honour, when the youngest daughter of our host came up and sung to him."

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balalaika.* The girls and boys draw up in two lines—regular parade order—the one rank facing the other; they then begin to clap their hands together, and gesticulate like insane drum-majors, singing all the while to this uncouth music: a girl and boy run forward from the rest, like distance-markers from a battalion on drill, and take their stand in the middle; they address one another in a strangely-monotonous rhythmical extemporisation, just as the matter, complimentary or otherwise, comes into their heads: the rest of the company at intervals join in the chorus with a most unearthly howl: and I and Zadonskoi were all this time sitting upon the place of honour, when the youngest daughter of our host, a lovely creature of about sixteen, came up to where we were, and sung to him—how shall I call it?—something of poetry, like an Italian woman I once heard at Odessa—an improvisatrice, I think they called her.”

“And what did she sing about? Do you not recollect it?” I inquired.

“Yes, I remember it,” said the honest Schtabz-Capitan, with a sigh, “for I have often heard it since; it was something like this:—

‘ Handsome and mighty soldier, our young warriors are dancing their
best,
And they are glittering in their silver-embroidered kaftans and weapons
of price;
But the young Muscovite chief is far handsomer than they,
And he wears golden lace on his shoulders.
He is like to a white poplar among the stunted firs;
But, alas! the silver poplar may not grow nor bloom in our cold mountain garden.’

“Zadonskoi rose immediately, and bowed to her with a winning grace peculiarly his own: he then laid one hand to his

* The national guitar.

forehead, the other to his heart, and requested me to reply for him. I know their infernal language too well, unfortunately, and told the little beauty what he meant, though I do not think he exactly knew himself.

"When she had left us with a graceful reverence, I was obliged to pinch my eccentric lieutenant, to bring him back from his vision to the more vulgar affairs of poor mother earth.

"Well, young gentleman," said I to him, "what think you now of our mountain beauties? Are the girls of the Caucasus still so unattractive? How do you like our fair minstrel?"

"She is incomparably beautiful!" said he, impetuously. "By heavens! I—but what is her name?"

"I was not a little amused at the sudden warmth of my elegantly phlegmatic friend. 'Her name, I believe, is Khalila,' was my reply.

"And really she was lovely! I, who take but little interest in such things, was struck with her matchless beauty, and I thought, if I was not fated to be a childless man, how proud I should have been of such a daughter—tall, slender as a lily, her eyes lustrous, dark and liquid, but with a spiritual expression, as if a saint was looking at you from a window of paradise—soft as those of the gazelle of her native hills, yet piercing through our uniforms into our very hearts. I have seen in my time the very choicest beauties of this same Circassia, but I never before or since saw anything to approach the holy beauty of that unhappy girl. Lost in deep thought, Zadonskoi could hardly move his eyes from the charming little heathen, and she as frequently, but furtively, turned her glances upon him. But the lieutenant was not the only admirer of the dark-eyed child of Kerim-Ogli; I had for some time observed from one of the furthest corners of the room another pair of fiery eyes that were meaningly fixed upon her.

On closer inspection I found that they appertained to a very old acquaintance of mine, by name Youzbash. This worthy was, I must inform you, of a somewhat indefinite character; not one of your peaceful herders of goats; nor yet had he ever been traced among *Shamyb's* ragamuffins, nor even only found guilty of a murder or two and half-a-dozen robberies, like most of his interesting neighbours. There was a great deal of suspicion attached to him; none ever knew how he came—how or when he departed—how he lived or where he lived; and yet nothing could be ever proved against the vagabond, who, by the way, was always superbly mounted and armed, notwithstanding his rags and apparent poverty. At times he would bring some sheep or cattle to the fortress, when it suited him, and sell them tolerably cheap; but there was no chance of driving a bargain with him, except on his own terms: what he demanded must be given. Were you to have cut him to pieces, the villain, I believe, would not have taken less. The rumour went that he occasionally indulged in a stroll beyond Kuban; and, to say the truth, he wore a face and bearing mightily suggestive of a brigand. He was a middle-sized, hardy, broad-shouldered fellow. As for the strength, dexterity, and agility of the miscreant, he was a fair match for the devil himself! His *besbmet** was always old, ragged, or covered with patches; but his arms—and he was always armed to the teeth—were not only of the very best quality, but were even richly encrusted and ornamented with silver.

“It was his horse, however, that made the fellow most remarkable; it was the pride of all Kabarda; and truly I believe he could not have been matched, nor could a finer animal indeed have been wished for. Of course he was envied by all the

* A kind of Circassian skirted coat.

horsemen of his race. It was said that more than one enormous offer had been made for its purchase, but he steadily refused to part with the gallant brute, and it was known that many fruitless attempts had been made to rob him of his treasure. I wish I could give you an idea of that horse—black as night, without a white mark; legs like bow-strings, and fine as a hare; upstanding, deep-chested, and broad in the shoulder, with a head like a stag, and the large Arab eyes—scarcely less beautiful than those of Khalila; and then his strength, spirit, and endurance! why, you could have swung him along for thirty miles at a hard gallop, and hardly turned a hair; and as for intelligence, he was cunning as a monkey, and clever as a dog; he would follow his master like one, and knew his voice and whistle as well; and Youzbash hardly ever took the trouble to tie him up or lead him—no dog, indeed, could have been more docile. It was a true robber's horse; and such, perhaps, are nowhere found but in the Caucasus, among the Turcomans, or in Kurdistan.

“That evening, however, the mysterious owner of the animal looked more sullen than ordinary; indeed, there was an undisguised swaggering fierceness about his manner that I did not like at all; and I observed, moreover, that he wore the steel shirt of chain-mail common to the country under his ragged *beshtet*. ‘This same iron garment he has put on for some purpose,’ thought I: ‘he has some villanous intention, or he never would wear it at a wedding.’

“The heat in the room about that time became insufferable, as well as the boisterous hilarity of the guests, who were now almost all drunk; so I sallied forth for a little fresh air. Night was covering the mountains, and the fogs began to issue forth from the ravines, as you perceived them rise to-night.

“It occurred to me, as I had nothing better to do, to go, under the cover of the penthouse, and look after our horses, and to see if

they had been fed, and also that none of their accoutrements had been pilfered by any of the ragged vagabond retainers of the vagabond visitors within: besides, one can never be too prudent when dealing with Circassians. I had a fine horse, too, of my own, and I had that evening observed that several Kabardians had been admiring him particularly, handling and examining his legs with all the gusto of connoisseurs, and saying at the same time, '*Iakschi téhé! check iakschi!*'—splendid creature! capital horse! &c. &c.

"In passing along the wall it struck me that I heard some voices conversing in a suppressed tone: the one I at once recognised as belonging to the graceless young hang-dog Abdourza, the worthy son and heir of our worthy host; the other spoke less, and in a lower key. 'What mysteries can the scoundrels be talking about here in the dark?' thought I; 'they are, perhaps, making a friendly little social bargain for my horse.' So I sat down near the wall, on some straw that was accidentally heaped there, and began to listen, intent upon not losing a syllable. Sometimes, however, the singing, or rather howling, and the angry, drunken wrangling within the house, interrupted my honourable occupation, and prevented my overhearing the whole of their conversation.

"'By the sword of the Prophet, but thou hast a beautiful horse!' said Abdourza. 'If I were a grown warrior, were I the master of a house and flocks, and had I a herd of three hundred steeds, yet would I offer to Youzbash the half of them for his Zilfoogar!'

"'Ah! just so, exactly! Ah! Youzbash, my lively friend, are you there?' thought I, and my mind immediately recurred to the shirt of mail.

"'Even so,' replied the deep voice of the Cataran, after a moment's silence; 'there be two Kabardas, O son of Kerim-

Ogli, and in both of them—the horse like unto Zilfoogar hath not yet been foaled!—the mountain riders sit round their watch-fires at night and tell tales of his speed and his endurance—the men of Georgestan are exceeding sick with envy, that the pride of the mountains is the steed of the robber Youzbash, and that he hath the bold heart and the strong hand to keep his treasure. Listen young chief! It was after the blessed feast of the *ramadhan*, on the further bank of the wild Terek, Zilfoogar the good steed bore the robber Youzbash to intercept the herds of horses of the accursed Russians; many bold mountain riders were with Youzbash on that foray, and but few returned: we were betrayed and the dogs of Russia beat us off. Youzbash, whose *shashka* was foremost as ever in the fight, and who was known to them by the steed he rode, even by Zilfoogar the steed of his soul, was hotly pursued by their Cossacks: their long lances were close upon his flanks—he heard the shouts of the rifle soldiers of the *giaours* behind him—and the voice of their rifles and of their whistling bullets as they sped after him, and rang at the same time about his ears. A dense forest was in front, thick and black as the tresses of houris in the seventh heaven of the true believer; but the musket-men of the Russians were between the fugitive and the friendly cover. Youzbash recommended his soul to *Allah*, and laid him straight along the dark back of his steed, clinging by the thick wealth of his mane, and with but one foot across his saddle, already wounded though he was, while the bullets shrieked around him like the voice of *ghoules* yearning for the dead; the wood was nearly gained, and——’

“‘But the Russian dogs (may jackasses eternally defile the graves of their mothers!) were between the bold Tscherkess warrior and the forest.’

“This complimentary interruption to my interesting friend the freebooter, as I had now fully proved him to be, emanated from that

hopeful young gentleman, our pet and particular favourite, Abdourza.

"Youzbash, however, continued the relation of his exploits, little dreaming, no doubt, that the commandant of the strongest Russian fort and garrison for twenty miles round, was within four feet of him.

" 'Even so, Abdourza,' he cried, 'and Youzbash could even hear the clicking of the locks of their accursed weapons as Zilfoogar, the pride of the mountains, charged the hounds of Sheitan (whose food be polluted to all eternity, and may they continually eat filth!) It was then, for the first and only time that the Tscherkess rider smote the thing he loved; the *kantchuk* * descended on the glossy skin of Zilfoogar, and with a sound as of woman in her death-shriek (a sound, boy, but once heard in a life) the brave horse sprang into the air amid a shower of balls. That maddened leap, to save his master, was as the spring of the wild goat of the Terek. Far, far over the heads of the cowering Moscovites it flew; with a shout we went together like a shot from the great, huge guns of the fort here—(may it crumble in ashes and its commandant be everlastingly rolled over by mangy swine!) We went crashing through the branches, Zilfoogar with two balls in his neck and a bayonet in his flank, and Youzbash with one more in his shoulder and three bullets through the skirts of his *besbmet*. Blessed be the name of Allah! the dogs cannot even shoot.'

" 'Thou didst, then, leave thy Zilfoogar to save thyself in the cover?' asked the young traitor, breathless with excitement; to which the adult miscreant thus responded:—

" 'Truly, young chief, such would have been wisdom: but as the young mother parteth not with her first-born, so even did

* A kind of whip attached to the end of the bridle.

Youzbash refuse to abandon his cherished steed ; he still kept his saddle and his way ; like a stricken eagle he was flying and struggling through the branches, sharp twigs were tearing the garments from around him, whilst the dry branches of the thorny karagatch smote the face of Youzbash, till the blood flowed to his girdle ; but he despaired not—did he not still bestride Zilfoogar, the pride of the Kabardas ? A deep chasm here opened as by the spell of an evil jin, at the feet of the flying steed ; the headlong pace had brought us to its very brink ; Zilfoogar was on his haunches like the springing panther of the Indian deserts ; another shout, and again we bounded forward ; but the courser of the Persian Roostan could not have cleared the yawning space ; he fell short—his forefeet clinging for life to the crumbling bank, his hinder ones struggling convulsively down the side of the abyss. It was a fearful moment ! The musket balls of the infidels were again ringing around us : with a groan of despair Youzbash slipped from his noble horse to give him a chance of safety ; but the shrubs he counted to cling to broke like the dreams of youth from his grasp, and the Tscherkess rolled down the precipice, amid the balls of the unbelievers, who thought him dead till he lodged bleeding and senseless on a ledge beneath. The dogs of giaours no longer sought the Tscherkess rider, and now turned their unclean souls to the capture of Zilfoogar, who, relieved of the weight of his master, had soon gained the brink of yonder gulf, and scoured wildly through the wood. Life must have soon returned to the maddened heart of Youzbash : he climbed and struggled round the side of the precipice, till he suddenly found himself again upon the plain and on the skirt of the forest ; and then, oh ! holy Bourick ! what a sight met his eyes ! Helpless, wounded, and unarmed, he—he watched the Cossack dogs, striving to capture his matchless Zilfoogar—'

“‘ And Youzbash could do nought.’

“‘My heart was filling with blood, and my eyes seemed to fail me. I looked up again; several Cossacks were careering over the steppe shouting after my brave courser, who ran in wide circles round them, as if in mockery of their feeble speed; for a long, long while, did the chase continue. But the pace of Zilfoogar began to fail—fatigue and loss of blood had done its work, and one among the best mounted of the giaours was nearly twice successful in throwing the fatal sling around his neck. I began to tremble, my heart sickened within me; I lowered my eyes and began to pray. After a few moments I opened them again and I saw—yes I saw the joy of my heart—my Zilfoogar free, *still* free as the wind: the shame of approaching capture had given him new strength; the pride of the mountains was fast heading his pursuers, flying along with head erect, his tail outstretched like a meteor, and the dog Cossacks labouring far behind upon their jaded steeds. May Allah be merciful to me! My heart was very big: this is the truth, O son of Kerim-Ogli! Suddenly the noble horse approached the hiding-place of Youzbash. Inshallah! I shouted forth the war-cry of our people: how shrill the neigh that responded to my well-known voice. Would'st thou believe it, Abdourza, he flew to me as the lost child to its nurse, and the Cossack hounds (may their shadows constantly diminish!) came but up in time to see the Tscherkess robber on his wondrous steed again, and hear his scornful laugh ring on the evening blast, as he winged his lightning way from their accursed sight, swift as the hurricane of the mountains to the Tscherkess fastnesses beyond Kuban.”

“And I could even hear distinctly how the ruffian was caressing with his hand the neck of his noble favourite (had I been near enough I fear I should have done the same), and lavishing upon him the most endearing epithets.

“‘And if Abdourza was now possessed of a thousand steeds,’

said the young villain, with renewed enthusiasm, 'yet would he part with them all for the Zilfoogar of Youzbash.'

"'Yok; it is impossible,' coldly replied the freebooter.

"'Listen to me, Youzbash,' said the hopeful son of our host, in his most persuasive voice, 'thou art a good man and a very valiant *djigit*,* but my father (may his days increase for ever!) fears the dogs of Russia nor will he allow his son to go into the mountains as a young warrior should. Give me thy steed, and Abdourza shall be even as the bond-slave of Youzbash; I would do everything thou biddest me. Shall I go with thee to the hills? I will steal for thee: say, wilt thou have the long Damascus rifle of my father, or his finest *shashka*?—'tis of the choicest steel of Syria; and since the days of the Prophet hath it been as an honoured heirloom of our race. The grey-haired *Oglis* of our clan say that it was enchanted long centuries ago in the wars of the true faith, and in those days would of itself fly from its scabbard in the unclean presence of the infidels. As for the steel shirt of mail of my father (may his flocks and herds continually multiply!) thou knowest 'twas made at Stamboul; nay, thine own, in comparison, is but as a fisher's net. Speak Youzbash! shall all these be thine?'

"Youzbash remained silent, notwithstanding the young gentleman's protestations and promises.

"'The first time, when I saw thy noble charger,' continued Abdourza, 'he was bending and springing under thee like a wild fawn among the rocks, with open nostrils, and with sparks of lightning flashing from his eyes and from his hoofs: since then something strange has happened to my soul, and my heart is empty. Oh! Youzbash, listen: I am not more myself; Abdourza is pining like a prisoned eaglet; he droops like the young eagle

* Circassian warrior.

that cannot see the sun. Upon the best horses of my father, who is a prince among our people, Abdourza may ride at will ; I look upon them with contempt ; I take scorn to show myself upon them before the Russian dogs, and much grief has overcome me. Be good to me, brave Youzbash : I have been sitting whole days long on the brink of some lonely precipice, to dream awake of Zilfoogar, whilst every moment my fancy pictured to me thy raven-black steed with his glistening shoulder, his deep chest flecked with snowy foam, his graceful movements, his full-flowing tail, fit for the standard of a Padishah, and his long-floating, cloud-like mane. I always see thy steed before me now, gazing into my eyes with that strange glance of his wild gazelle orbs, as if he wished to murmur the unknown words of some Arab charm, into my ear and then turn into a jin.

“ ‘By the beard of Mahomet I swear to thee, Youzbash, I shall die if thou wilt not sell me thy horse !’ added Abdourza, in a trembling tone, but subdued and passionate.”

“ I fancied I heard his voice break as in sobbing : but I must tell you here, that the young wolf-cub, if you have not guessed it yourself already, was the most incorrigible and determined young villain I ever met ; and to obtain a tear from his eyes was a rare thing indeed, even when he was considerably younger, and I felt he must have been deeply moved to have evinced so much feeling.

“ In reply to his emotion I heard something like a low, derisive laugh.

“ ‘Listen !’ said the young scoundrel, in a more determined voice ; ‘listen to me, Youzbash : I am ready for all—I will dare all. If thou wilt, I will steal for thee my sister—it is said thou lovest her. She is the fairest virgin on this side of the Torok, and she dances lightly as the bayaderes of Indostan ! She sings, too, as sweetly as the music-bird of the Palts of Iraun. She embroiders in gold like a beneficent jin ; and she is lovely as a Peri. So fair

a wife no Turkish Pasha ever possessed ! Say, brave Youzbash, wilt thou have her ? Nay, answer. If thou wilt have her, wait for me to-morrow night in the shadow of the overhanging precipice, where the stream breaks over the fall. The fair sister of my childhood shall be with me ; she shall with us to the mountains, and she shall be thy bride. And dost thou really think, my beautiful Khalila, the child of my father—even the daughter of Kerim-Baba-Ogli—not worth thy Zilfoogar ?’

“For some moments, perhaps, after this extraordinary proposition Youzbash remained silent, and nothing was heard but the agitated breathing of Abdourza. At last, instead of a reply, the robber began to sing derisively, though in a tone so low as indeed scarcely to be audible, the familiar words of an ancient ballad of the mountains :

“Many bright virgins are dwelling in our valleys,
 Their eyes in the dusk are glittering like stars.
 It is sweet to love them—thus poets have sung—
 But, oh, sweeter is the freedom of youth !
 Gold will buy more than seven wives,
 But a matchless steed hath no price ;
 He will remain true ‘midst the storm-blasts of the steppes ;
 He will not desert thee—he will not betray thee :
 Gold doth the first ; woman will do both.’

“The persuasions of Abdourza remained as ineffective as before ; tears, promises, protestations, and lies were alike useless. In impotent rage the young villain now threatened and menaced the robber incoherently, and of course with the like success, till at last Youzbash thus impatiently interrupted him :—

“‘Away, I say, foolish child ! away among the women ! How darest thou dream of riding the proud steed of Youzbash—a *man* must sit in the saddle of Zilfoogar. Upon the first three paces he would throw thee in the path, and thou wouldst break

thy girlish neck upon the stones, or be taken home to weep among the women of thy sire's *anderoon*.'

"'Die! dog of a robber!' almost screamed the boy in the sudden madness of his passion; and I plainly heard the steel of his childish kingal clinking against the shirt of mail of the cataran.

"His firm hand easily threw off his boyish assailant; and the fall of Abdourza against the light mud wall made it shake to its feeble foundation.

"'There will be the devil among us for a lively guest,' thought I, 'by way of the usual termination of a Tscherkeess feast;' however, I hastened into the stable, where I saddled our horses and led them quickly into the outer court. In less than two minutes there was a tremendous noise and outcry inside the house. That charming youth, Abdourza, it appears, had made his appearance before his father and his inebriated guests, rushing in among them in a torn beshmet, and swearing lustily that Youzbash had attempted to cut his throat. All the company, with a simultaneous shout of execration, came running forth like maniacs, with drawn weapons and firearms ready loaded in their hands, while the women were flying and screaming in all directions. The enjoyment of the evening (according to the Tscherkessian fashion) was now at its highest point—never was there, perhaps, such an infernal charivari. All were shooting and roaring, yelling and slashing at the same time, but to little purpose, save that of wounding themselves or their friends. The robber Youzbash was already on his steed, and by dint of sheer horsemanship was spinning round and about among the crowd in the road like the devil, or a German in a waltz, and with a dexterity and agility, admirable enough in their way, was defending himself against them all with his *shashka*.

"'It is a bad thing to get a headache among strange company, saith the proverb,' I observed to my eccentric friend

Zadonskoi, while laying my hand on his shoulder. 'Would it not be as well, lieutenant, for us to be off as soon as possible, while our spurs are sharp?'

" 'I shall wait,' said he, coldly, and with more than his usual indifference—'I shall wait and see how it will end.'

" 'Undoubtedly it will end very badly,' said I to him: 'it is always thus with these mountain villains; as soon as they have their skins full of *bousa*, their thievish hands find the grip of their weapons, as it were, instinctively, and they begin to sabre one another if only in friendship. So back, sir, to the fort, I say.' " And so ended the Capitan.

"And pray what became of the gentle Youzbash?" asked I, rather impatiently, of my companion.

"What *can* happen possibly to such born devils!" replied he, in emptying his glass of tea; "the dog was thrown desperately from his horse we heard soon after."

"And did he meet with his death on the spot?" I inquired.

"Not he, sir," answered the veteran; "the evil one knows his own too well, and takes too good care of them—not he; he was alive after that, and to some purpose. Indeed, these miscreants can hardly ever be killed. Why, for instance, I have seen a fellow beaten to a mummy with the butt-ends of muskets, after having been pierced with bayonets and riddled like a colander, and still waving his *shashka* around his shameless head, and shouting like a madman. They don't seem to know really when they *ought* to die—they are a people, sir, without the slightest idea of propriety."

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CHAPTER II.

AFTER a few moments of silence, the good Schtabz-Capitan thus again resumed his narrative, while stamping on the ground, as though in impatience at the recurrence of some disagreeable recollection :—

“ There is one thing, certainly, I shall never forgive myself for—the devil must have had a hand in it I am sure; for after our return to the fortress, I repented everything of the interesting conversation I had overheard between Abdourza and the robber from behind the wall, to my young friend Zadonskoi.’ He smiled at the time, I remember; but I little imagined then that such a smile could be so replete with fatal meaning.

“ Some few days after this marriage-feast and its abrupt termination, the young villain Abdourza paid us a visit again in the fortress. As was his custom, he went into Zadonskoi’s quarters, who also took much notice of the boy, and had made him numberless little presents of sweetmeats and other trifles that are prized by persons of his age. I was present at the time; and our conversation was turned, as if by chance, upon the subject of horses, by Zadonskoi, who praised the renowned courser of Youzbash with the most extraordinary warmth; and while speaking of the perfections of the animal, he did not omit to dwell on the pride and exultation that a man must feel in being the possessor of such an unequalled creature. The restless eyes of the Tscherkess boy began to sparkle with excitement—but Zadonskoi appeared not to notice it. I attempted, from pity for the poor little fellow, to turn the conversation to something else; but to no purpose, as the lieutenant would immediately bring the conversation back by some means or other, to what now seemed his

favourite topic—the freebooter's horse. This occurred upon every visit that the young Circassian made at the garrison; and I also observed that Zadonskoi now encouraged his visits as much as possible. Three weeks had scarcely elapsed since those wedding festivities, when I began to observe a considerable alteration in the appearance of the stripling: he became pale, listless, and weary; his hawk-like eyes lost their wonted fire and fearless expression—just as the appearance of a love-sick girl would, I suppose, be described in a romance; his manner, too, had grown tame, subdued, and spiritless.

“However, sir, I got to discover the cause of this wonderful change before long. It seems my eccentric lieutenant had worked upon the boy's imagination, (and, as I then fancied, merely for his amusement,) until he had nearly affected the boy's brain, and the wretched Abdourza would have gone through fire and water to have obtained his wish.

“Zadonskoi's object you may arrive at from the following conversation, which was afterwards detailed to me.

“‘I see it all, Abdourza,’ sneeringly said he; ‘thou likest the horse of Youzbash amazingly; but thou wilt see of it as little, nevertheless, as of the back of that curly head of thine. But tell me now in confidence, silly boy, what would'st thou really give to the friend who would present thee with the robber's horse—the finest steed of the Caucasus?’

“‘All and everything that he would ask me for,’ replied the boy, passionately.

“‘In that case I will get it for thee,’ said the lieutenant coolly; ‘it is, however, but upon one condition.’

“‘Swear that thou wilt fulfil thy promise,’ exclaimed the excited boy.

“‘I will, upon my oath as a soldier!’ said Zadonskoi, impressively; ‘but it is for *thee* to swear to *me*, to fulfil *my* condition.’

"I swear!—I swear by the blessed stone of Mecca!" ejaculated Abdourza.

"It is well," continued the lieutenant. "Now mark me: I declare to thee thou shalt become the master of the robber's steed; but thou must first deliver into my hands thy sister Khalila—she who sang to me at thy father's hold. Zilfoogar, the pride of the mountains, shall be the price for her. Does the bargain suit thee, Abdourza?"

"The boy was silent.

"Thou wilt not?" pursued the wily lieutenant: "I see thou wilt not: but please thyself! I thought thee a man and a young Tscherkess warrior—nay, thou art I find but a child: thou art too young to sit on a horse's back."

"And my father!" murmured Abdourza, half abstractedly.

"Is he never absent?" demanded Zadonskoi.

"He is often absent from his stronghold," was the response.

"Wilt thou agree, boy?—quick, an answer."

"*I agree!*" faintly whispered the wretched stripling, with a deathlike paleness. "*When?*"

"On the very first occasion that Youzbashi trusts his robber carcase within the fortress. He is soon to drive hither a flock of sheep and cattle for the garrison—the remainder will be *my* work. But remember, Abdourza, thy oath, and the condition."

"Thus, then, it seems they concluded their villainous compact. To speak the truth, it was a crying shame! I spoke my mind not long after to Zadonskoi on the subject; when I had been informed of all this."

"Did he feel the robuké, sir?" I demanded of the old officer.

"I fear not," said he; "for his reply was, that a half wild Tscherkessian girl ought to feel but too happy in the love of a Christian gentleman; and that, according to their own original custom in the hills, where might was right, he was nothing less than her

husband; and as regards Youzbash, again, Zadonskoi declared that he was a robber and a confessed rebel, and that it was time he should get his due. Judge yourself, what was I to reply to such sophistry as this? But at the time, however, of this infamous arrangement between him and our hopeful young friend I was entirely ignorant of their views.

"Youzbash, some time afterwards rode into the fortress to inquire if the garrison was in want of sheep, honey, or any other commodities in which he condescended to interest himself. I ordered him to bring us sheep and certain goods the next day.

"'Abdourza!' said Zadonskoi, as he afterwards admitted to me, 'to-morrow Zilfoogar and the longings of thy heart will be in my hands; but if thy beautiful Khalila lightens not the gloom of the fortress ere the nightfall, the robber shall be told that the young chief would rob him of his treasure, and the noble horse shall for ever be lost to thee.'

"'It is well!' answered the young miscreant, and hastened down into the valley.

"At nightfall, too, it was reported to me that Zadonskoi, armed to the teeth, had also left the fortress on horseback: how the affair was managed between them I never exactly understood. Not long after watch-setting they both returned to the garrison; and the sentinel saw clearly that the young Tscherkess held the indistinct form of a woman in his arms before him on his saddle; her hands and feet appeared to be fastened, and her head, and indeed her whole person, was wrapped and hidden in the thick woollen folds of the huge cloak-veil worn by the women of the mountains."

"And the robber's horse?" inquired I of the Soltabz-Capitan.

"Just so, exactly," said he as usual, and continued as follows:—

"Early the next morning after the reveille, as soon indeed as

the gates of the fortress were opened to strangers for the day, arrived Youzbash, driving his sheep before him with the assistance of some ragged Tscherkess boys from the village, and their gaunt jackal-looking dogs. He dismounted from his cherished horse, and secured it carefully to an arm-rack by the guard-house, before he entered my quarters. My bargain with him was very simple and was soon concluded; but I remarked that he was more anxious than usual to handle the roubles, as though money was more an object to him than ordinary. It also struck me that his costume and appearance were less ruffianly, his *besmet* less ragged and dirty, and his beard and mustaches seemed actually, though so late in life, to have formed an acquaintance with a comb. I made him sit down, and presented him with a pipe and some brandy; for though I had found him out at last to be a brigand and rebel, still I had myself made the discovery in a somewhat equivocal manner, and was not, moreover, supposed to know it; and, with all his faults, he was a bold, daring vagabond, and useful to us in his way.

“We conversed upon divers subjects while smoking at the open embrasure; and I found him so much more docile than was his wont, and so evidently disposed to conciliate, that this amiable change, together with the improvement of his outer man, occasioned me to say to him jokingly—

“‘Why! how now, Youzbash? you are as fine to-day as a turkey-cock newly accoutred after moulting. Have you received your little remittances from beyond Kuban? or are you going courting the Tscherkess girls—with a view to matrimony and the continuation of the breed of honest men throughout the Caucasus?’

“The innocent slightly changed countenance, but at which of the suggestions it is difficult to say.

“‘Come, now,’ said I, in the same strain, ‘tell me, Youzbash,

who is the fair one you distinguish with the preference? You are silent? Well, I will guess, then,—what do you say to Khalila the fawn-eyed daughter of the old chief in the valley yonder?’

“It was amusing to see the rough mountain cataran flash up at the magic word, like a school-girl at the sudden mention of her lover’s name; the shot had hit the target fairly. He, however, answered evasively, and with an air of exaggerated humility—

“‘Kerim-Baba-Ogli of the valley is a great chief, and his child is brighter than the rainbows hovering over the falls of Terek; her beauty hath made glad the heart of Youzbash. But the sides of the rocky hills are covered with the flocks and herds of her sire—and he is rich in stores of gold, of silver, and of arms of price. Youzbash hath but his *shashka* and his horse.

“‘Which means, my friend,’ said I to him—disgusted with his hypocrisy and with the figurative language used by these scoundrels of the hills—‘which means simply, that the girl’s friends would see you at the devil sooner than give her to a wandering, smuggling, thieving, murderous, ragged, tatterdemalion like yourself.’

“The hot blood flushed up to his very eyes, which seemed to emit sparks of living fire as he exclaimed passionately—

“‘Youzbash is of the noblest tribe of the Tscherkess—his fathers were mighty warriors among the people! flocks and herds and gold he hath not now, but he will win them, Inshallah. Both the Kabardas boast not a stronger arm or sharper weapon, and the Shah of Iran and his proud Gholams ride not upon steeds like to Zilfoogar!’

“Fairly hit again, thought I; the fellow loves the girl. But here my reflections were cut short at once by a savage yell like the roar of the wounded tiger; it was from the freebooter, who had

turned towards the embrasure to calm himself, perhaps, after his burst of indignation.

"My horse! my horse!" he exclaimed frantically, as he bounded rather than rushed past me from my quarters to the courtyard below.

"I had heard the iron-shod prancing of a horse, as though violently spurred and urged, upon the stones of the parade-ground of the fortress. I naturally attributed the not-unusual sound to the sudden advent or departure of a cossack with despatches; but I was far from divining the real cause of the wary robber's explosion of violent emotion. I, however, followed him hastily in his headlong flight in time to see him strike the sentry to the ground, who had of course brought his bayonet to the charge, on seeing a stranger flying from the fortress in a manner so unusual. Outside the walls the affair explained itself at once. Abdurza was careering at speed down the hill-side on Zilfoogar, the coveted horse of the freebooter, and Youzbash was deliberately taking aim at the guilty boy when I arrived, with the matchlock-rifle he had unslung with the speed of thought from his shoulders. His piece missed fire. Again the fatal barrel was presented: the gaunt form of the mountaineer and his long rifle quivered for an instant; the next, and they were fixed as though carved of adamant. A breathless pause—and the report that rung and reverberated wildly among the rocks and hollows of the mountain instantaneously followed. The smoke cleared away—and, by heavens! the unerring weapon of the maddened robber had missed its aim at his dearest need, and, with a yell of anguish and despair, he turned upon us as if at bay—his bronzed features distorted and convulsed with excess of passion, while he glared and gnashed his teeth like one possessed; the next instant, with the frantic violence of a maniac, he had dashed the offending rifle into a hundred pieces against the rocky ground, and then stood

silent and motionless gazing after his retreating steed now lessening fast upon the sight.

"That moment of silence was sublime in its intensity of suffering.

"Gradually a strange and inexplicable expression stole over the ashy paleness of his rugged but expressive features: he rose slowly to his extreme height; his eyes appeared to dilate in size till they seemed about to start from their sockets; his arms were thrown far above his head, as though convulsively grasping the air; and with one loud, though plaintive, wildly-ringing exclamation of 'Zilfoogar!' he fell heavily forward upon his face.

"It was as though a bronze statue of despair had been hurled from its pedestal. I never before or since saw intense anguish so thoroughly depicted, and I shall never forget it.

"The soldiers of the garrison and others, attempted to raise him, but to no purpose; we fancied he had burst a blood-vessel or had been stricken with sudden death—it was not so; yet he steadily refused to move a muscle, to turn his face from the sand, to answer our questions, or to give any voluntary sign of life. Hour after hour went over, but he remained in the same position. I ordered the money due to him for the cattle he had brought us to the fortress to be laid near him, together with some provisions and wine. It grew late; and when the gates were closed for the night, the prostrate form of Youzbash still remained in the same attitude. The next morning, however, he was gone, but the money and the provisions remained untouched. His complete despair was easily accounted for, taking into consideration the more than Arab-like devotion of the man to the noble creature he had lost; for he well knew that if Abdourza had taken his horse from him with the concurrence of his father, and, consequently, with the support of his somewhat powerful sept, it was hopeless for him to attempt its recovery. And if without it—he naturally concluded that the young villain would flee away.

to the insurgents, where, with the prestige of his father's name, he was sure of being well received. Thus in either case his cherished Zilfoogar was lost to him for ever."

"And what did the father?" demanded I of the old Schtabz-Capitan.

"Well," answered he, "he certainly did nothing in that matter, at least, as Youzbash did not see him: he had left his hold, for a six days' journey into the mountains. Without this occurrence it would have hardly been possible for the young miscreant to have carried off his sister, and the news of her disappearance must have been cold comfort to the already bleeding heart of the free-booter. It was reported in the garrison, that the day after his double loss, — when he was seen last, indeed, — his hair had turned of an iron grey. However that might have been, when Kerim-Baba-Ogli returned, he neither found his hopeful son nor his favourite daughter. The boy was wise enough to know that the old man would have shortened his stature by a full head had he ventured within his power after this affair. And indeed from that time Abdourza was no more seen; he joined some of the numerous hordes of robbers no doubt that infest the mountains so plentifully; or he has probably, as I before suggested, taken service with that lively gentleman ShamyI, who with his insurgent vagabonds has given our brave fellows so much trouble. He would be in mischief wherever he may be, if indeed he be still alive, which I doubt, for it is more than probable that, among the ruffians he has attached himself to, by a kind of retribution, he has been put out of the way by some one of them for the possession of the noble horse that tempted himself to his ruin and to crime. And truly I think that society may in time be brought to think its loss not altogether irreparable."

"And the poor victim of his villany?" I asked.

"Just so, exactly!" answered the veteran in an altered tone.

"I was about to tell you—it was reported to me the next morning that a stranger was in the fortress—a woman—and that she was believed to be in the quarters of Lieutenant Zadonskoi; it was then and for the first time that I understood the whole affair, and became aware that it was our poor mountain flower that was in the hands of my erring subaltern. The matter was grave, and had to be treated seriously." I at once arose, and dressed, put on my epaulettes and dress-coat, buckled my sword to my side, and proceeded to his quarters.

"I found him laying stretched out at his full length upon his bed in the first room, wrapped in a rich Persian dressing-gown: his head was resting upon one hand, and in the other he abstractedly held his long-pipe-stem, which he appeared to have long since smoked, while his eyes seemed fixed on vacancy. The door leading into the second room was locked, but the key I perceived was not in its place. At a glance I saw all this, and too well comprehended the whole arrangement. I began to cough, and strike my heels somewhat impatiently upon the floor,—but he either did not, or pretended not to hear or see me.

"'Lieutenant Zadonskoi!' said I, in the severest tone I could adopt, 'is it possible you should not be aware that the commandant is here to see you?'

"'Oh! ah! yes, just so. How do you do, Sergey Antonovitch? Good morning to you—will you smoke a pipe?' replied he, with natural coolness—and without moving from his bed.

"'Pardon, sir,' said I, 'on *this* occasion I am not Sergey Antonovitch—and you are to understand I am the Schtabz-Capitan Sorokin!'

"'Very well,' he replied, 'as you please; though it really seems to me very much the same thing in the end. But what will you take this cold morning? I have some famous *maraschino* here; shall I ring for some breakfast, if my fellows have anything fit

to put before you : but really you would pardon me if you only knew how infernally bored and annoyed I am !'

" 'I know all and everything,' replied I, coming forward towards the bed, with an air of indignation.

" 'Then it is all the better,' said he, more coolly than ever ; 'for I can assure you I am very little disposed to talk.' And he threw himself back upon his couch.

" 'Do you know, Lieutenant Zadonskoi,' I resumed in the same tone, 'you have committed a grave offence, for which not only you, but myself may be made seriously responsible ?'

" 'You are jesting, commandant ! what is this all about ? we are surely too good friends to quarrel about trifles ;' and with that he took a small hand-glass from a neighbouring shelf and deliberately looked at the state of his teeth.

" I naturally felt annoyed.

" 'I rarely jest, Lieutenant Zadonskoi : you will deliver your sword, and consider yourself under arrest.'

" 'Oh ! by all means,' said he, calmly as ever. 'Christoff ! Mitko ! Petrooshka ! my sword, some of you. D——n the fellows, where are they ? I must really apologise for keeping you waiting, commandant.'

" One of his servants brought his sword, which he delivered to me. And now, having performed my duty, I sat down upon the edge of his bed ; and changing my manner, to his apparent astonishment, I spoke to him as follows :—

" 'Listen to me, Fedor Romanovitch. I have done my duty, and I am now again Sergey Antonovitch, and I am speaking to you as a friend and as a father : confess to me that you regret the excess you have committed.'

" 'What wrong have I done ?' demanded he, with innate petulance.

" 'You know well, young man, you have carried off yonder poor

girl, the child of a neighbouring ally. As for that young villain, Abdourza, if I could but catch him! Have you not acted very wrongly?' said I again.

"'But, my dear sir, she pleases me,' he observed, with the greatest *sang froid*.

"You may guess my surprise," said the honest Schtabz-Capitan to me. "What would you have had me reply to that! I rose from my seat quite stupified, and paced the room. Nevertheless, after a short interval of silence, I told him, that if the old chief discovered where she was, he would have to give her up.

"'Not at all!' said my imperturbable subaltern; 'he can never discover it.'

"'Sooner or later he is sure to be told, sir, that she is here.'

"'And how is he to know it? unless our paternal commandant thinks fit to volunteer the information.'

"I was again electrified; but before I had time to answer he had once more resumed, but this time his natural manner, and with a sudden warmth.

"'Hear me, Sergey Antonovitch'—here he raised himself from his bed and took my hands in his; 'you are a kind-hearted man, you know these people well, and I need not tell you that if we return his daughter to the old savage, he will either cut her throat or sell her for an *Odalisque*. The mischief is done, and I have, I allow, been much to blame—but we must not willingly hurry on a catastrophe;' and changing his versatile manner again to the most winning tone possible, he added, 'Leave her with me then, commandant, and take my sword yourself, and believe me, if you are still angry with me, that you will take away with you the most dangerous affair of the two.'

"I could hardly help smiling at the lieutenant's cool request; but, at the same time, I could not hide from myself that he had reason on his side to a certain degree.

"‘I hardly know,’ said I, ‘what is to be done. But where is the poor child? let me look at her.’

"‘She is on the other side of yonder door,’ he responded; ‘my attempts to see her this morning have been fruitless; she sits there crouched in a corner, wrapped and muffled in her veil, and without speaking, without moving; frightened, like the young gazelle of her own mountains on its first capture. I have engaged the wife of our sergeant-major, who knows the language of her people, to attend upon her and console her, and to teach her to understand that she is *mine*; for I swear to you that she shall never belong to any one else but me!’ added he, striking the table violently with his clenched fist.

"‘I was weak enough, I believe, to let him have his own way, sir,’ continued the Schtabz-Capitan: “I hardly knew, indeed, what else to do,—and there are certain people with whom you must agree, under any circumstances.”

"‘Well, then,’ asked I of the old soldier, “did he ultimately succeed in accustoming the unhappy girl to his society, or did she long continue in the state of despondency that your lieutenant described to you?”

"‘Why,’ answered the narrator, “the ties of home are not so cherished with these people, I think, as with others: to their country they are, however, passionately attached; and from the walls of the fortress she could see the same mountains as from the old chieftain’s tower in the valley, and these fair savages are habituated to the idea of being somewhat summarily disposed of. Besides Fedor Romanovitch made her daily some new and expensive present; but nevertheless, during the first days, she silently and proudly refused to look at, far less to accept, anything which was procured for her by the lieutenant and her attendants, whose persuasive talents were considerably awakened and increased by the sight of all these trinkets and fineries. Ah, presents!—

presents ! what will a woman not do for some few coloured stones and silken rags ? But let us not speak of that. * * For a long time, however, the assiduities of Zadonskoi were entirely unsuccessful ; but in the interim he had learned to converse a little in the language of the Tscherkess, and she on her side began to understand a little Russian. Little by little she became habituated to her prison ; and would even condescend to look at him—in the beginning carefully and askance—from the corner of her long lashes. But she was still always melancholy—singing the plaintive songs of the mountains in an under voice to her poor little self, in such a tone, too, and with such inexpressible tenderness of intonation, that even I could not help feeling touched and pained when I heard her, as I often did, from the other room. One scene I shall never forget : I was passing under the windows of the lieutenant's quarters, which were open, and I could not help glancing into the room. Khalila was lying, poor child ! listlessly on a couch of bear skins, with her fair head bent heavily upon her bosom : Zadonskoi was standing before her, with his arms folded.

“ ‘ Look upon me, sweetest Peri ! ’ he was saying to her in a tone of deep emotion. ‘ Canst thou not guess that sooner or later thou wilt be mine ? why, then, heart's flower, dost thou torment me with thy silence thus ? Shouldst thou, perhaps, love one among the Tscherkoss ? I, for thy sake, will love him too ; if so, I am ready to let thee free from my fortress home, and thou shalt depart immediately to thy people.’ ”

“ The little captive trembled imperceptibly as she shook her head.

“ ‘ Or,’ continued he, ‘ canst thou not bear to look upon me ? am I odious to thy sight ? ’ She sighed as he proceeded. ‘ Or does thy religion, sweet mountain gem, forbid thee to love me ? ’ ”

“ She grew paler and remained silent. ‘ Believe me, Allah is

the same towards all beings of the human race ; and if he allows me to love thee thus fondly, why should he forbid thee to love me a little in return ?”

“She looked him steadily this time in the face; as if vanquished by this novel argument ; while her large eyes expressed both a childish incredulity and a wish for persuasion. What eyes ! they were at once as soft as dewy violets and as fiery as burning coals.

“‘Listen to me, sweetest, dearest Khalila !’ continued the enamoured lieutenant : ‘thou seest how much I love thee ; believe me, I would part with all the world can give if I could ; but arouse thee from thy young heart’s stupor : indeed, indeed, I wish to see thee happy ; but I tell thee, if thou grieveest thus, that I shall die. Nay, now, Khalila, hope of my heart, tell me that thou wilt be more cheerful.’

“In a little while she was lost in thought, but still without moving her dark eyes with their strange expression from his face. A colour gradually spread over the pale loveliness of her features, and a smile—oh ! how slowly, but how beautifully—stole over them, as the poor girl gradually bowed her head in sign of assent. He took her little hand in both of his, and began to entreat her—but almost with the manner of a brother—to give him a kiss ; she turned away from him and feebly resisted, but only said—

“‘Nay, I pray you, do not, do not !’

“He became more pressing, and she began to tremble violently, as she said to him with dignity—

“‘I am thy prisoner, Russian, and thy slave : thou art the stronger and thou canst compel ; but the love of the child of Kerim-Ogli may not thus be won !’

“And the hot tears of resentment fell fast and plentifully on her flushed and glowing cheek..

“My impassioned lieutenant, touched by this evidently unex-

pected rebuke, struck his forehead violently with his fist and rushed into the other room. I walked round and entered his quarters; he was walking up and down the outer room rapidly, with his hands behind his back, and evidently in no very amiable frame of mind.

“Well, Zadonskoi, my friend, how does your fair pagan treat you?” I demanded.

“She is a devil sir, but not a woman!” he answered with a burst of passion. ‘I,’ he continued, ‘who was never yet baffled by a woman, to be made the plaything of this little savage. Curses on my weakness,’ he added after a pause, and with some bitterness. ‘Curses on my weak heart, that she should be so dear to me. Bah! it is sheer nonsense,’ he proceeded, ‘and it must end. Look you here, commandant, I give you my word of honour that she shall love me of her own accord in a week from to-day, or she shall be free to go where she will.’

I shook my head incredulously.

“Will you wager, commandant, that this change shall not take place within a week from to-day? Let it be a new sword against a week’s leave of absence with my rifle after the wild goats.’

“Agreed,” said I. We shook hands and parted.

“The next day, at an early hour, he sent an express even as far as Kislar, with an order for different purchases: it speedily returned to the garrison with a quantity of the most precious Persian stuffs, costly articles, and jewels of every kind; to enumerate half of them would be tedious.

“What think you of all this, commandant?” demanded the lieutenant of me, somewhat exultingly, perhaps, as he displayed all these fineries, one after another to me. ‘Will our oriental beauty withstand the combined attack of all these batteries?’

“Yes, that is all very fine; but you don’t know the Tscherkessian girls, my good friend,” was [my reply; ‘you must not

judge them by the Georgian, Trans-Caucasian, or Tatar women; they have a sternness of purpose, that answers to the dogged ferocity and indomitable courage of their amiable brothers and fathers; they are quite a different race: and notwithstanding all these pretty things, unless you can touch her heart, I do not yet despair of my wager.'

"Zadonskoi answered me with an arch smile, and began to whistle a march. I have often thought the young puppy perhaps imagined he knew as much about women and the ways of the world as I did.

"But it so happened, after all, that I was right—the rich presents and trinkets produced but the half of their anticipated effect; she became perhaps more cheerful, and a little more confiding—but that was all. The week had now nearly elapsed—and I certainly almost thought myself the winner of the bet—when the lieutenant, grown desperate, determined upon adopting his last resource. On the morning of the last day he ordered his horse to be saddled, and for the first time since his arrival at the fortress arrayed himself in a gorgeous Tscherkessian* costume, and thus accoutred, and armed to the teeth, he entered the chamber of his captive.

"'Khalila!' said he, 'thou knowest well how fondly I have loved thee. I did thee wrong to steal thee from thy home; and thou canst not, I see, forget the past: yet I had hoped, that when thou hadst grown to know me better, thou wouldst have forgiven if thou couldst not have loved me: I was mistaken. Fare thee well, Khalila! remain the mistress of all that is mine; if thou wilt, leave this place and return to thy people, for though I am hated by thee, thou art free. I have wronged thee, and the retribution

* The Russian officers serving in the Caucasus wear this costume when thrown in advance, to escape the bullets of their mountain enemies.

shall now come ; the punishment awaits me. Fare thee well. I depart from here at once—and perhaps never to return ; I know not and care not whither I go. Perhaps thy Russian tyrant will not have long to seek the avenging bullet, or the fatal sweep of the shashkas of thy kinsmen,—*then*, cruel, unrelenting girl—and not till then—remember Zadonskoi, and forgive the past !”

“He turned away slowly and stretched his hand towards her, to bid her once more farewell ; while his eyes were fixed upon her countenance, as if his soul was pouring from them. But she did not take his hand, and she remained silent. I was standing by the open door, and could just catch a distant glance at her pallid face : and I felt grieved for her,—a death-like hue had now spread over her chiselled features ! Receiving no answer, the wily subaltern made a few steps towards the door with a sigh as though his heart was bursting. And I really believe that had poor Khalila remained much longer inflexible and distant, my wayward friend would have been even capable of doing that in full earnest which he was now simulating in mere pretence. But his character was as extraordinary as inscrutable ; Heaven alone could fathom the depths of that man’s heart. Scarcely, however, had he slowly opened the door, when, with a sudden impulse, she sprang with a shriek from her seat, and in another moment she had flown across the room and her arms were round his neck. Would you have believed it, sir ? I now entered the room. It was really most affecting ; the wild fawn of the mountains was effectually tamed, and was weeping passionately on the bosom of her captor, who was himself touched almost to tears ; while I, on my side, really could not help,—that is—I mean—you know—just so—exactly—at least not exactly—nonsense !

“However, I lost the sword, and Zadonskoi spent his leave of absence no doubt very pleasantly ! But I know he did not hunt the chamois that week.”



"Then cruel, unrelenting girl, and not till then, remember Zadonskol, and forgive the past."

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The brave old Schtabz-Capitan here grew silent, but thought seemed busy with him.

“Yes, I must confess,” added he afterwards, playing with his grey mustaches, “that I was pained to think at the time that no woman had ever loved me with such truth and devotion.”

“And was their happiness lasting?” asked I of the worthy old soldier.

“Well, she confided to us that from the very first day she had beheld my handsome subaltern, on the occasion of the marriage of her sister, she had often seen him in her dreams; and that never a human being had made so deep and indelible an impression upon her mind as her now beloved Zadonskoi. Yes, I suppose they were happy!—for the time.”

“How tiresome!” was my somewhat uncharitable but involuntary exclamation. “Truly, I must confess I had expected a tragical conclusion; and now to find myself thus unexpectedly disappointed in my hopes!—it was actually provoking. Was it, then, really possible,” continued I to the narrator, “that the father of the poor girl should never have discovered, or have been informed, that his daughter was hidden with her abductor in the fortress?”

“It is very probable, I think, that he had some suspicion; but a few days after the sudden disappearance of his daughter, we were informed that the old man was slain. And it happened thus—”

My attention was again willingly captivated.

“I must premise, that Youzbash was under the impression that the chieftain’s son had robbed him of his horse with the consent, if not assistance of his father: this at least was my supposition. However, the revengeful villain laid in ambush for the old chief on his homeward path in a steep ravine, at about the distance of three versts from the valley. The wretched father was returning home disconsolately from one of his many

fruitless searches after his missing children; his followers were riding some hundred yards in the rear: this occurred towards nightfall. Slowly and thoughtfully, no doubt, the chief was walking his horse, when at once, Youzbash, like a tiger cat, sprung forward from his ambush, weapon in hand, upon the old warrior, and shouting, 'This for Zilfoogar!' struck him from his horse with a fatal blow of his long kinjal. Kerim-Baba-Ogli was dead before he reached the ground; the assassin caught his valuable horse by the bridle, sprung into the saddle, and was no more seen. Some of the foremost retainers of the old prince witnessed the termination of this fatal scene, but were still too far distant to be of any assistance. They instantly commenced the pursuit with headlong speed, but without success—the freebooter had escaped."

"He made up his loss, then, and obtained his revenge at the same time," said I, with a view to hear the opinion of my now communicative companion.

"Just so, exactly—and after their mountain fashion," said the Schtabz-Capitan: "they would tell you he was perfectly justified; so I suppose he was."

Meantime our tea-equipage had been packed away: all was ready for departure long since; our horses were impatiently stamping and scraping the crisp snow with their feet, while the moon grew paler in the west, and seemed preparing to shroud herself from sight amidst the black tempest clouds that were hovering over the distant mountains, as if torn asunder by their lofty peaks. We now stepped into our vehicles and left the wretched hut far behind us. In contradiction, however, to the prognostication of my weather-benten and weather-wise fellow-traveller, the atmosphere began to clear up soon after, and promised us a fair morning. A sea of stars was glittering above us; but one after another of these lamps of heaven lost their brilliancy before

the pale reflection of the approaching dawn which now began to spread over this stupendous prospect, imperceptibly illuminating the rugged peaks and steep chains of those sublime elevations. To the right and left dark chasms became visible; the fog was gathering and stretching out from the sides of the hills. All was still, even to solemnity, in the heavens and on earth—like the heart of man in his rare moments of calm, or when at his morning devotions and communing with his God. We were, however, progressing very slowly on our journey; five half-starved creatures were dragging our vehicles with considerable exertion over the difficult road of the redoubtable "Gutte-mountain." I and my military travelling companion were walking behind, and assisting as well as we could, by putting stones under the wheels when we found the horses flagging in their wind and strength. It appeared now as if the road were leading directly to heaven,—for as far as the eye could see the path still led upward until it was lost in a far mass of distant clouds of moving fog, which had been resting on the lofty crest of the "Gutte" since the previous night. The snow was crisp and crackled beneath our feet; the air was now so thin and rarefied that it became almost a difficulty to breathe; the blood was incessantly speeding with a tingling sensation to the head; but with all that I experienced an indescribably pleasant sensation of exultation through all my nervous system: my muscles appeared to have been newly strung, and I felt as though endowed with the strength of a giant, and my animal spirits were proportionately elevated to see myself so far above the surface of our every-day world—a childish feeling I agree; but, removed so far from the conventionalities of society, and approaching so much nearer in contact with nature, we sometimes, unwittingly perhaps, become children again: much of all that is artificial and acquired drops off from the weary heart, and it

becomes again for a time what it was once before at the early dawn of life; and, undoubtedly, what it will one day become again.

At last we arrived upon the "Gutte-mountain." We now paused and gazed around us: a grey cloud was hanging over the verge of the extreme peak, and its cold breath appeared threatening an immediate tempest; but towards the east everything looked so clear and golden that my worthy fellow-traveller and myself had forgotten all about the sinister import of the menacing phenomenon. As far as the Schtabz-Capitan was concerned, his silence and dilating eye testified how deep was his appreciation of the magnificence of the scenery around us; and I very much doubt if, in a heart replete with simplicity like his, the impression of the mighty beauty and holy loveliness of nature is not greater by a hundred-fold than with us enthusiastic dabblers in words and phrases upon paper and by rule.

"You are, sir, I should conceive, accustomed to these superb effects of nature?" I remarked.

"Yes," he responded; "but my feelings are, no doubt, less enthusiastic than your own, for a man can learn how to suppress any involuntary beating of the heart. One may become accustomed to the whistling of a bullet."

"I have heard it said," I rejoined, "by some of your old *grogards*, that this kind of rough and fatal music can even become agreeable in the excitement it affords."

"Just so, exactly, if you think it possible; but everything, sir, can be exaggerated," he added with his usual good sense; "still, as even human nature can be exaggerated, it may be as you say—but I confess *I* never found it so."

The sun was just beginning to show itself from behind a vast mountain of a purple hue, which was scarcely to be distinguished by a well-accustomed eye from the threatening clouds; but

across the broad disk of the sun I observed a peculiar and blood-red stripe, to which my more experienced companion paid particular attention.

"I prophesied to you," exclaimed he, "that we should have a storm to-day: we must now hasten on, or else we shall most undoubtedly be overtaken by it—and before we have passed these same cross-mountains. Hurry on your horses, you drivers!" shouted he to our *yamtchicks*.

New efforts were immediately commenced; the drivers took hold of the bridles to lead their weary cattle on, and we now began to descend. On our right we had a steep and perpendicular rock, on our left a precipice—so deep, that the small village with its inhabitants at the bottom of its immense profundity appeared like a nest of creeping ants. I shuddered while gazing down the giddy abyss, as the idea struck me that it may frequently happen, in a dark and stormy night, upon this fearful road, where two vehicles could not possibly pass abreast without danger, that some one or other of the imperial messengers who have to pass this way, frequently ten times in the course of the year, without leaving his fragile and shaky *telega*, might be hurled into the gulf and lost.

One of our drivers was a Russian, a peasant from the government of Jaroslav, and the other an Ossetian-Tatar. The latter was guiding the leading horse of our little *cortège* by the head with the utmost prudence, and evidently prepared for any casualty, whilst our careless Russian did not even get down from his seat, till peremptorily ordered by me to do so. When I told him that he might as well be as careful as his fellow-driver, even if it were for the sake of my portmanteau he gave me this cool and characteristic answer: "Well, master, with the help of God we may yet arrive as safe as they; besides, we are not ahead," alluding to the *telega* of my fellow-traveller,

which was now in advance of us: and he was partly right, for there are periods when the greatest possible amount of care cannot insure the passage of this fearful place with safety. However we crossed without mischance.

“Well, here we are at last before the Cross-mountain!” observed the old Schtabz-Capitan to me, when we had descended into the Boundary-plain; and he pointed to a lofty elevation covered with a sheet of snow, upon the top of which a huge cross of stone could be discovered; under it a scarcely perceptible thread of road was with difficulty to be distinguished, and which is traversed only at times when the principal one is covered with deep snow and otherwise impassable. Our drivers again informed us that no avalanches had, as yet, taken place; and they still, like us, trusted to their feet—thus sparing their horses, which they continued to lead. After having for some time wound round the base of the mountain, we met about half-a-dozen stout Ossetians. They offered us their services, which were accepted, and sticking manfully to the wheels, loudly shouting in a noisy chorus, they began by main force to force along our labouring *telegas*. And it was really a truly dangerous road; over our heads on the right, hung enormous avalanches of snow, already half detached from the sides of the precipices, and apparently ready with the first gust of wind to break asunder and overwhelm us beneath their enormous weight; our narrow path, too, was almost hidden by the snow, which in some places gave way under our feet, and in others, and when it was least expected, was changed into sheet ice by the action of the rays of the sun during the day and of the frosts during the night. Thus it was with the greatest possible difficulty we proceeded at all, and our horses repeatedly fell. On the left of our road was a deep open gully, into which a mountain stream was rushing with violence, hidden at intervals under an icy covering, and again bursting forth with

renewed vigour, and covering the black rocks that fringed its bed with its white and gleaming foam. In two long hours we had, with great trouble, rounded the Cross-mountain.

In the meantime heavy clouds were gathering around us, while it began to hail and snow simultaneously; the winds moaned and reverberated wildly among the natural caverns, gullies, and crevices of the rocks, till the unearthly sounds gave me the idea of the chorussed shouts of demons on a Walpurgis night, or at a witch's sabbath. The stone cross was by this time covered, and gradually hidden by the fog—the clouds of which, blown over from the east, became every moment closer and more dense.

It may be as well to stay a moment and speak about this stone cross. There exists an erroneous but very prevalent tradition, that it was Peter the Great who placed it on the summit of this mountain whilst passing through the Caucasus; but history will inform us that Peter never went farther than Daghestan, and the cross itself bears an inscription in large and legible characters, to the effect that it was erected by the especial command of the celebrated Russian general Ermoloff, and at no earlier date than the year 1824.

We had yet more than three versts of icy rocks and deep snow now to traverse before reaching the station of Koba. The horses were thoroughly wearied, and we ourselves half frozen, while the storm increased in violence, and seemed to be coming nearer.

“This is getting rather serious,” said the old officer; “the mists are closing round us—there is already nothing to be seen except fog and snow; we must be most careful, or we shall roll down some precipice to a certainty, or fall into a snowdrift and be buried alive; accidents which are by no means uncommon, I assure you, amid this beautiful scenery, which you admire so much. But what is that indistinct object I see below yonder? By heavens! the ‘Baidara’ is overflowing its

treacherous banks, and we shall not be able to pass her to-night, perhaps. Here you have the beauties of Asia. Such are the climate, the people, and the rivers—impossible to rely upon any one of them.

Our drivers, with shouts of anger and excitement, were most unmercifully, urging the wretched horses, which now, from sheer fatigue, resisted, and refused to move an inch further, notwithstanding the persuasive eloquence of the whips, and the utmost efforts of the relentless yamtchiks.

"Your Glory," at last said the foremost of them, "it will be impossible for us to arrive at Koba this night; would you allow us now, while it is yet possible, to turn towards the left? There is something darkish we have observed there on the mountain side, that may possibly be the cabins in which travellers shelter themselves in such tempests; these Ossetians here say that they can guide us to them, if your Glory will give them something for strong drink," added he, pointing to the strange mountaineers who had so lately assisted us.

"I know it well, and have known it for many a year," said the veteran. "These rogues, they are always prepared to stick to one somehow, in the hopes of getting drunk at one's expense."

"Yet you will agree now, Schtabz-Capitan," said I, "that we would be considerably worse off without them."

"Just so, just so; exactly," he muttered; "fine guides they are—very—to the brandy-shop; they hear, see, and smell by instinct, where they have a chance of taking advantage of you, as if it was impossible to find our way without them."

My worthy friend's prejudice against the inhabitants of the country was one of his many peculiarities, and it probably had its origin from his protracted service among them, the consequence, no doubt, of his poverty and want of influence; and which was certainly not unlike an innocent banishment.

Here we turned sharply to the left, and somehow or another, after a deal of time and trouble, we arrived at our miserable asylum, consisting of two small huts, built of sandstone and bricks, and surrounded by a wall of the same material.

The squalid-looking wretches, our new hosts, received us with joy and exultation. I ascertained afterwards that the government pays and provisions these poor people, upon the condition that they should be continually on the alert to afford shelter to travellers overtaken by the sudden storms peculiar to these mountain regions.

"All is for the best, perhaps," said I, seating myself near the fire; "you will now be at any rate enabled, my dear Sehtabz-Capitan, to finish your history of poor Khalila; for I cannot but imagine it does not end where you last ceased to narrate it."

"Indeed! And pray why should you conceive so?" demanded the old soldier, with a playful smile, as he lit his eternal pipe.

"Simply because it is not in the natural order of things that that which was commenced in so unusual a manner should terminate tamely, like an affair of every-day life."

"You have guessed right, sir," was his response.

"I can easily conceive," commenced the veteran, "that the narration of these sad though somewhat romantic circumstances may amuse you, but with me it is different; and the associations they recall are fraught with much that is painful and melancholy. I will keep my promise, however; but I assure you that had I guessed my first allusion to the habits of the Caucasian villains would have led insensibly to the detail of these sad facts, I would never have commenced. . . . Poor Khalila! At last I became as much accustomed to her as though she had been my daughter, and she loved me, too, I believe, as though she had been my own child. I must tell you, though it will hardly be of interest, no doubt, that I have no relations. Of my father and

mother, and others of my family, I have heard nothing for these last twelve years; and as for a wife, the idea would arrive too late in life for me. There was a time, perhaps—but no matter—happiness is but for the few.” Here the Schtabz-Capitan paused; but the flickering light of the fire that played on his marked and manly features betrayed something very like a large round tear, and just about to fall, too, from those honest eyes of his, now fixed in dreamy vacancy amidst the embers; he, however suddenly added, more cheerfully, “And now you see this grizzled beard and weather-beaten face of mine would hardly win a wife worth having; and thus it was, I suppose, that I was glad at least to find a creature to regard with interest and kindness. As for Zadonskoi, he complained that I spoiled her. God help her! she was but a child after all. She used often to sing and dance before us—and what a beautiful dancer was this wild mountain maiden! I have seen our provincial ladies dance a thousand times; I have even been once at the aristocratic assemblies in Moscow, where I saw the court Polonaise in all its grandeur, though that was about twenty years ago; but what was all their dancing compared to the fawn-like agility, the natural grace, the soul-born dancing of our little Tscherkessian damsel! Fedor Romanovitch had made a positive idol of her, notwithstanding his objections to my spoiling the little witch; and she now appeared to have forgotten her people and her home, and to be as perfectly happy as though she had been born within the walls of the fortress, and she had grown so lovely, since she had become reconciled with us, that it was a positive delight to look upon her. Her face and hands were perfumed with flowers, blushes were ever playing on her cheeks, which now glowed again with health. What a lovely thing she was: she contrived to endear herself to us all. The little mischievous heathen would be always playing us some trick or other; in fact she would not even spare me,

commandant though I was—but she well knew her power with us all!”

“Was she not sensibly affected when you spoke of her father’s death?”

“We concealed it for a long time from her, until she became more habituated to her position; and when we informed her of it at last, she wept bitterly for a day or two, and then all was forgotten again.”

“For the space of about six months everything went on most charmingly. Fedor Romanovitch, as I think I have already observed to you, was passionately fond of the sports of the field. Before his connection with poor Khalila, the greater portion of his time was passed in the open air of the forest, and in his adventures with the wild boars and less dangerous goats of the mountains; and now, since what he called his ‘marriage,’ it was difficult to persuade him to move even beyond the walls of his quarters. But one morning I watched him walking up and down in deep thought—it was in the courtyard of the fortress. His hands were crossed behind his back—a sure sign with him that he was ill at ease; every now and then he would look upwards, as though questioning the weather anxiously; and the next morning the mystery was solved: without a word of notice to any one of the garrison he was off to the hills with his rifle. He did not return until nightfall. This now happened repeatedly—oftener and still oftener—till the greater part of his time, as before, was spent outside the fort. ‘The charm is then at an end,’ thought I. It was so, indeed: the flowers had fallen withered and unwreathed from the chains with which he had voluntarily bound himself to the poor mountain girl.

“One morning, however, I paid thoman early visit, and I was indeed shocked at the change I perceived. Khalila, whom I had not seen for some days, was sitting on her couch of bear-skins,

wrapped in a black silken *beshmet*, but so pale, so melancholy, and so altered, that I was positively alarmed at her appearance.

“‘And where, then, is Zadonskoi?’ I inquired of her.

“‘At the chase.’

“‘Did he leave the fort to-day?’ She remained still down-cast, and as if it was even a task to her heavy heart to give me a reply.

“‘No; since yesterday,’ said she at last, evidently with an effort, and sighing deeply. ‘Khalila was thinking yesterday till thought was sick, and her heart was dead,’ continued she, amidst her tears; and added, ‘Khalila trembled yesterday at the breeze, thinking to see her Fedor brought in wounded to his castle home. The wild boars of the valleys are fierce, and the rocks where dwell the antelopes are steep and dangerous: the vengeance of her people, too, is deadly; sharp are their weapons, and their rifles sure. But to-day Khalila fears he loves her not.’

“‘Indeed, my poor child!’ said I to the unhappy girl, ‘thou couldst not imagine anything more sad. But I’ll be sworn that thou art wrong.’ Alas! I had my own presentiments: but she sobbed for some time bitterly; then, suddenly, and proudly lifting up her head, she swept away her tears and proceeded thus:—

“‘If he loves not now the poor Tscherkess maid he stole from the stronghold of her fathers, let him send her back thither; the fiery kinsmen of her race may slay her, but it would not be with indifference. Should he further slight the being he has taught to love him she will of herself depart. Khalila is not a slave! she is of the noblest race of the Tscherkess. Khalila is the daughter of a prince!’

“I began now to soothe her. ‘Listen to me, Khalila. Dost thou not see that he cannot be ever sitting here in this gloomy

fort for his whole existence, as if stitched to thy garments, like these pretty golden tassels. Thy loved one is young—is bold and impetuous; he loves thee, but he also loves the perils and excitements of the chase: he will be absent for a while to enjoy them, and then will he return again to refuge him from these fatigues in thy arms. But, shouldst thou still be dull, sullen, and reproachful, thou wilt displease him, and then he will shun thee in reality.’

“‘It is true!’ she exclaimed, as if suddenly inspired by my words;—‘it is true! and Khalila will weep no more.’

“And gaily catching up her tambourine, she began to sing, dance, and play around me, as if to thank me for the consoling idea I had offered. But this forced cheerfulness was not of long duration, and she again fell on her couch heavily, as unexpectedly as she had sprung up from it, and hid her face within her little hands.

“What was I to do with the poor withering flower?—I, a rough old soldier, who never had had much intercourse with, far less experience of, womankind. I considered for some time how to divert her from her regrets. I took my old silver watch from my pocket, and, opening its works, showed them to her; but she turned away pettishly, and covered her head with her veil, as if to shut out the sight of it. I was fairly puzzled, and I could not think of anything else. For a long while we could neither of us find words—a very ridiculous as well as very unpleasant position.

“After a while I spoke thus:—‘Wilt walk with me upon the ramparts of the fortress, Khalila? See how brightly the sun is smiling upon us!’

“This was in September—I recollect it well: and really the day was superb, clear, bright, and temperate; the most distant of the mountains were visible, as if ‘upon a dish,’ as our Russian

saw has it. We walked silently for some time up and down upon the wall. At last she sat down upon the grass near one of the guns, and I seated myself upon its carriage. Certainly, I can hardly help smiling when I now remember it, to think that I was running after, watching her, and talking nonsense to amuse her, like a dry-nurse.

“Our fortress was built upon a considerable elevation, and we had a fine view from its ramparts. On one side of us was an extensive plain, intersected here and there with narrow ravines and footpaths leading into the forest, which stretched to an immense extent—as far, indeed, as the spiny mountains. Here and there the smoke was issuing from the cabins of the herds, who were engaged in watching their grazing flocks. On the other side, a small mountain stream was merrily flowing, both banks profusely covered with flowering shrubs and bushes, partly hiding the rocky mounts, which here began, and increased in size as they receded, till they joined to and formed a portion of the principal chains of the Caucasian ranges. We happened to be sitting near the corner of a bastion, so that we could overlook both sides of the landscape; and I was looking forth in deep thought when I beheld a stranger, mounted on a large grey horse, issuing from the skirts of the forest. He rode gradually nearer, till he at last stopped on the other side of the little stream, about a couple of hundred yards or so from us, and began to swing his horse round and round, and to make him rear and plunge like a maniac, or a drunken Indian of the Pampas.

“‘What a noble horse!’ said I. ‘Look here, Khalila—thou who hast eyes as lovely as they are young! Who is this mad-man? and whom has he come to amuse here?’

“She looked round languidly, but exclaimed, with quick and impetuous energy, ‘It is Youzbash!’

“Ah! the robber, the villain!” thought I; ‘does he dare to come so near us?’ I looked once more; it was, indeed, Youzbash. The girl was right: it was he, with his dark, swarthy face, his shaggy beard, and wild appearance.

“‘He rides my father’s war-horse,’ said Khalila, as she caught me convulsively by the hand. She was trembling like a leaf, but her eyes were flashing with an expression that was actually terrible in its intensity, and which I could hardly have believed them capable of evincing.

“‘Aha!’ said I; ‘the wild mountain blood runs even in thy delicate veins, gentle flower as thou art!’

“‘Chief,’ said she, emphatically, ‘*he slew my father!*’

“‘Just come here,’ I quickly said to the nearest sentry. ‘Examine your piece, my man, and bring me down that murderous scoundrel. Smartly, now—cover him well, and a silver rouble for the hit.’

“‘Thanks, your Glory!’ answered the soldier, without moving a muscle of his countenance at the order; ‘but this strange fellow will not stand still for a moment.’”

“‘Bid him to do so,’ said Khalila, who, pale as death, and with eyes dilating on her enemy, stood like the statue of an avenging Nemesis.

“‘Hallo! comrade!’ shouted the sentry, while waving his hand to the assassin. ‘Can’t you stand still a moment, like a Christian? What are you twisting round for yonder, like your grandmother’s spinning-wheel?’

“Youzbash here suddenly arrested the mad gyrations of his steed, and appeared to listen, thinking no doubt that we were disposed to communicate with him. Just so, exactly!—my grenadier, who had covered him with the quickness of thought, fired upon the miscreant. Pshaw! his musket had missed its aim. Scarcely had the powder flashed in the pan, when the robber, with

a jerk of his rein, brought his horse at least a dozen paces from where he had stood. The next instant he was off at speed; stopped his mad career again for an instant as suddenly; reared the animal on its hinder legs and stood up to his full height in his stirrups; shouted something in his own language which we could not hear, threatened with his *nagaika*,* and vanished into the depth of the forest as quickly as he had appeared.

“‘May thy head lay as low as that of Kerim-Ogli!’ shrieked the gentle daughter of the murdered chieftain to the discomfited grenadier—and that, too, with a bitterness of passion that would have done credit to the fierce old warrior she sought to avenge.

“‘Left-handed peasant!’ said I to the man. ‘How is this?’

“‘Your Glory!’ answered the abashed grenadier, as he carried arms to me, ‘he made off to die: these abandoned people (saving your presence) it is impossible to kill at once.’

A quarter of an hour after this Zadonskoi returned to the fortress. Khalila threw her arms around him, without a word of reproach or complaint for his protracted absence. Even I was angry with him.

“‘What have you been about?’ said I. ‘We have just now had a visit from that scoundrel Youzbash: he showed himself on the other side of the river, and here we had a shot at him; and how long do you think may elapse before you may be knocked over by a bullet from his rifle? These mountaineers are a revengeful people—with them it is a virtue; and it is impossible but that by this time he must suspect you of having caused this poor child to be carried off. I am ready to wager anything you will, that Khalila has been recognised by the villain to-day. Who knows, indeed, but what his daring visit—

* The whip attached to the end of a Circassian bridle.

and on her father's horse, too—was but to reconnoitre, and satisfy himself that she was here; if so, he must have seen her. I remember well, besides, that about a year ago she pleased him, —he himself admitted as much; and if he had had the success that now and then attends these brigand villains in a worldly way he might have married her.'

"Hereupon Zadonskoi grew thoughtful.

"'Yes, commandant,' said he, 'you are right, and we must be more careful for the future.'

"'Khalila! from this day forth thou must no more be seen in daylight on the ramparts.'

"This was all very well; but there was a coldness in his manner to the poor girl that pained me exceedingly. In the meanwhile things went on as before: not only did he now absent himself more than ever on his shooting excursions, but he became day by day more obviously indifferent: he now rarely spoke to her. The health of the unhappy girl began sensibly to decline—her face grew pale and thin, and her eyes dim and haggard, while she seemed plunged into a state of apathy that was appalling.

"'Why dost thou sigh, sweet Khalila? Why wilt thou look so sorrowful?' She would either not answer me, or it was but by a single word,

"'Nothing.'

"'Is there aught that thou dost wish for, Khalila?'

"'Nothing.'

"'Say, my child, art thou mourning for thy kindred, thy friends?'

"'Khalila has no friends! no kindred!'

"'Nay, what wilt thou have me do for thee, Khalila?'

"'Nothing.'

"'Thus, sometimes, whole days would pass away, as though the

ping girl was in a trance, and except *yes*, or *no*, I could not draw a syllable from her.

“On all this I took an early opportunity of remonstrating with Zadonskoi; and to my grief and surprise he answered me thus:—

“‘Listen to me, Sergey Antonovitch!—and do not start from me as if I were a fiend, because you cannot understand my character, which I allow is an unhappy one indeed. If I am the cause of the unhappiness of others (and it has ever happened thus throughout my life), I feel not the less wretchedness myself. I allow it is but a feeble consolation for those who suffer through my waywardness and the violence of my rash passions. Yet so it is; my passions have so long had the rein that they drag me with them in their mad career. I may not now arrest them—and they bear me where they will. From the arms of my nurse I was spoiled, and from my cradle I have been a slave to those violent impulses that have already made me prematurely old in heart and almost in body. From my earliest youth and from the moment that I found myself freed from parental care, parental authority with me, alas! never existed. I intoxicated myself to madness with all the pleasures, creditable or otherwise, which a princely fortune could command, and, it is sad, commandant, how those pleasures have wearied my heart. I now entered the great world, and society soon caused me the same sickening effect. Like the girl in “Egmont,” you may imagine, I have *gelebt und geliebt*. I became enamoured with the proud beauties of the high ton and fashion, and was beloved, perhaps, in return; but their conventional *agaceries*, and artificiality awakened only my amused imagination and piqued my egotism and self-love: my heart still remained void as before. To escape from myself I now turned to the fount of knowledge. It is said that I have talents—it is possible—and I easily mastered those difficulties that

I wished to surmount. I studied much—I read immensely—and I now wrote. I was praised, encouraged, and courted; but I found that it was because I was rich, and I discovered that men a thousand times more talented than myself were slighted and repulsed, and were perishing everywhere around me in their poverty. Increased knowledge also made me more wretched, for I discovered, too, that neither fame nor happiness were fairly to be won with it; I found that the happiest were the most ignorant, assuming, and self-sufficient—and as for fame and success, I saw them throughout society easily attainable by wealth or interest, adroitness or charlatanism. Enough, commandant; I was disgusted; and I again plunged into the world and a vortex of dissipation. Circumstances favoured my wild passions, and they again carried me to the verge of ruin; you may yourself have guessed that. I was sent here to the Caucasus *en penitence*. A sorrowful change, indeed, from the Imperial Guard: and yet I have spent here the happiest days of my wretched existence, for I taught myself to believe that the demon *ennui* was not to be met with within sound of the report of a Tscherkessian matchlock. I was again mistaken. After a month's sojourn among your wild scenes here I grew habituated to the whistle of a ball, and to the chance of death itself, which for me possesses but few terrors; and I am more fatigued in soul now than before, and once more I feel that burning irrepressible fever for excitement and change of scene, which through my extraordinary life has been my master passion. I am now in despair, for I have lost my last hope! When I first saw Khalila in her unsophisticated beauty I thought I loved her—when she was for the first time lying in my arms and gazing with devotion in my face, and when I kissed her silken curls, as she playfully hid my head in their luxuriance. I was a fool, and I was deceived, for I thought her an angel of paradise given to me by a sympathising fate. I find that I was

wrong: the genuine, the almost fierce love of this wild girl is but a little better than the sentimental platitudes of the high born belle of a court circle; the obstinate devotion and childish simplicity of the one is as fatiguing as the coquettish *aiseries* of the other. And yet I love Khalila still, for I owe her the recollection of a few happy though fleeting moments. I feel all her worth, her beauty, and her love: I am ready to make any sacrifice for her: were it necessary, I could die for her, anything but remain with her—she now fatigues me. Am I a fool, commandant, and do I err from feebleness of mind, or am I completely evil-hearted? I do not know; but it is true that I deserve as much compassion, perhaps even more so, than this poor girl: my mind, if not my heart, has been spoiled by contact with the world; my mind is calm but my heart is empty; and once more the demon of restlessness and change has thrown his spell upon me. I must depart, for life appears to me more void and meaningless with each returning day; one only remedy is left to me—it is change of scene. I must leave you, commandant. As soon as I have the opportunity I will depart; but not for Europe—God forbid! I will visit the wilds of America, India, Africa, the far South Seas. I may perhaps conquer in time the evil influence that is upon me, or, better still, I may perish on the road.

“Do not believe me guilty, I pray you, commandant, of affectation, when I swear, on the honour of a soldier, that I am weary of my life.”

“He continued in this incoherent manner for a long while, and his words have made a deep impression upon me, as it was fortunately the first time in my existence that I had heard a healthy, rich, and handsome man, of scarcely twenty-five, utter such sentiments, and with such an appearance of bitter truth; and I hope, with God’s mercy, that it may be the last. Such a frame

of mind is to me as inexplicable as it is fearful. Do you not think so?" continued the single-hearted soldier, turning towards me; "you were, I think, but lately in the capital: tell me is it possible that there should be many of such unhappy temperament and perverted character?"

I told him that there were many such—many who suffered fully as deeply as his unhappy friend, and from the same cause, namely, a surfeit of the pleasures of life of which they had drunk too intemperately; a reaction of the body and the mind after the prolonged excitement of dissipation, which had weakened the powers of the one and destroyed the energies of the other;—but I also informed him, to his great surprise, that there was a class of persons who simulated such feelings from sheer affectation; for that "lassitude," both moral and physical, had lately become fashionable throughout the civilised world, and that, like all other fashions which have their origin from the higher classes of society, that this peculiar absurdity had also ramified and communicated itself to the lower degrees of the social scale, who "follow suit" invariably in all that emanates from those above them; and that in these latter days, indeed, this particular affectation had been so generally ridiculed, that those of the highest *ton*, where the best taste is always cultivated and to be found, even when suffering from the deepest and most genuine *ennui*, now hide such feelings as they would their vices; as the sentiment, genuine or otherwise, had become so common as almost to be vulgar.

The old Schtabz-Capitan did not exactly appear to catch the point of these observations; he shook his head gravely. Suddenly, however, his face lit up, and turning to me with the somewhat triumphant air of a man who has made a great discovery, he said—

"I see what it is, sir; it is these infernal Frenchmen who have made *ennui* fashionable!"

"No, sir; not they alone," I answered. "The English may well combat with them the honour of the invention."

"Ah, bah! what's that you tell me," replied he. "I am told the English never invent anything; besides, the beef-devourers are known everywhere throughout the world as swillers of beer and confirmed drunkards."

This sally of the simple old soldier brought forcibly to my recollection the opinion of a Muscovite lady, of high fashion, concerning Lord Byron, when she confided to me that the noble poet was confirmed in habits of the most brutal intoxication, and wrote only when under the influence of brandy. It is astonishing, indeed, how prevalent this opinion, however erroneous, is throughout the empire. With the Schtabz-Capitan the idea was the more excusable, as, being personally so scrupulously abstemious, he naturally strove to persuade himself, if not all the world—like others who pique themselves on a favourite virtue—that the real cause of the many evils of this wicked earth arose from the abuse of strong liquors.

Meanwhile, however, with a little management on my part, he continued his story in the following words:—

"Youzbash did not show himself again near the fortress. But I could not somehow divest myself of the idea that he had come there on the last occasion for some sinister purpose, and that we should soon hear of him again. Not long afterwards, Zadonskoi proposed that I should accompany him on a boar-hunt. I declined for some time, for a boar-hunt was no amusement to me. I had been hunting the fierce Tscherkesses for too many years to feel any excitement in it. The lieutenant, however, as usual, was victorious, by dint of good humour and persuasion. I was certainly very partial to that young man, and I never could

refuse him anything in reason; so I sallied forth with him. We took about half-a-dozen of our smartest and best-mounted Cossacks, and left the fortress early in the morning. Till ten o'clock we were fruitlessly beating up the country, among the rocks or in the forest, but not an animal of the chase was to be met with.

“‘I think we may as well return, lieutenant,’ said I; ‘what is the use of our any longer striving to thrust our society upon these wild pigs of yours, since it is very evident they are bent upon avoiding us; besides, it is getting too warm: we have clearly not chosen a propitious day.’

“Fedor Romanovitch, however, like an inveterate sportsman as he was, heeded neither the sun nor the fatigue; and he gave me to understand that he positively would not return without game. He was such a devil of a fellow that lieutenant, if he once took a thing into his head, that it was impossible to dissuade him; no doubt, when a child, he must have been ‘mamma’s pet,’ and so most royally spoilt. However, at mid-day, we at last met with one of those infernal animals. Bang! bang! from both our barrels, and he was off—hit or not we could not tell: we lost him in the underwood, and we saw him no more. Yes! that day proved unlucky, indeed, in more ways than one; however, after a short interval of rest, we rode homeward to the fort.

“We were silently riding side by side, our bridles hanging carelessly upon the necks of our horses. We were soon close to the garrison, which was not more than half a verst from us, and the walls of which were only hidden from us by the thick intersecting branches of a small wood we were then traversing; when all at once we were startled by the sudden report of a rifle. We looked at one another for an explanation; and I think that we must both have been actuated by a like pre-

sentiment. Acting upon a common impulse, we immediately spurred our horses to a gallop in the direction of the discharge, and, on approaching the fortress, we perceived a group of soldiers on the walls, gesticulating violently, and pointing with their muskets towards the plain below; and, following their indications, we now beheld a man on horseback, at full speed, scouring away over the steppe, holding something white before him on the pommel of his saddle. The horse of the fugitive was of a dark iron-grey, which, coupled with the appearance of its rider and our own presentiments, did not long leave us to surmise with whom we had to deal. Quick as thought, Fedor Romanovitch urged his horse to the top of his speed in pursuit—I immediately behind him, and our Cossacks, according as they were mounted, straggling up while he unslung his rifle from his back. Fortunately for the occasion, and thanks to our disappointments of the day, our horses were still comparatively fresh.

“We were now at full speed, and every stride was bringing us nearer and nearer to our object of pursuit, till at last I could plainly recognise Youzbash; but for the life of me I could not discover what it was he was carrying before him, though it was obviously owing to its weight that we were approaching him so rapidly in the race. I had by this time arrived, in our headlong career, within speaking distance of Zadonskoi, and I shouted out to him, ‘It is Youzbash!’ He looked round at me, and the expression of his pale and livid features I shall never forget. It seems he saw more than I did; however, he said nothing, but bent his head low over the saddle-bow, while he lashed his horse onward like a madman.

“We had now arrived far within rifle range of the flying miscreant, and we could almost see the Satanic scowl of concentrated passion with which, notwithstanding his most frantic

exertions, he found that we still continued to gain upon him. I think I could safely wager that in that moment he was thinking of his Zilfoogar.

"I now beheld Zaslonskoi standing in his stirrups, notwithstanding the pace, and aiming at the fellow with his piece. 'Do not fire, lieutenant,' shouted I: 'reserve your charge; we shall be upon the villain without it.'

"But the impetuous, hot-headed youngster at the wrong moment delivered his shot while I was still speaking, and we soon found that the ball had broken the hinder leg of the robber's horse: the wounded animal (the same that had belonged to Kerim-Ogli) after a few more bounds staggered, and fell forward on its knees.

"Youzbash sprang down from his saddle; and then it was we could perceive that the object he had so carefully carried before him was a woman, wrapped and muffled in her shawl—*was Khalila!*

"Unfortunate Khalila!

"The murderous villain shouted something to us in his own language, and raised his drawn weapon menacingly over her prostrate form. There was no time for reflection, and it was my turn now. I pulled my horse up on his haunches, covered the scoundrel, and fired; and I must have hit him in the shoulder, as he suddenly dropped his arm with a swinging motion. When the smoke cleared away and we had ridden up, we perceived the wounded horse of the robber lying outstretched on the ground.

"But poor Khalila was insensible and bathed in her blood.

"As for Youzbash, he had thrown away his rifle and slipped like a wild cat through the cover of the underwood into the ravine: I would have given at the moment five years of my existence and my chance of promotion to have

stopped his road with a bullet, but I had not had time to charge my rifle.

"We dismounted from our horses and hastened towards the suffering girl. Poor Khalila! she was motionless as a statue, and her crimson blood was welling from a deep wound. The miscreant had not even had the mercy to strike her to the heart—all would then have been over in an instant, and her death struggles would not have been so cruelly protracted; but, on the contrary, his felon knife had severed her shoulder with a fearful gash. Had he possessed a thousand lives, he should have forfeited them all for that dastard blow. She had, of course, fainted from loss of blood. We tore her veil into shreds and strove to stanch her wounds as tight as possible; but she still lay there prostrate at our feet, and senseless as a corpse. The hot kisses of Zadonskoi upon her cold hands, her marble forehead, and her pale lips were, alas! unavailing. Not even the warm caresses he had so long ceased to lavish upon her could recal her to herself. There was not a dry eye among us; and the grim Cossacks who were standing around, were swearing under their beards with suppressed but concentrated rage that the villain had escaped us.

"Zadonskoi was the first to mount; while I, with the assistance of the soldiers, lifted her carefully from the ground, and placed her as gently as we could in his arms—the home of her heart—before him, on his saddle-bow. He now encircled her drooping form firmly and safely, and we turned our horses' heads towards the fortress: we of course proceeded slowly, but after a few moments of gloomy silence, Fedor Romanovitch, who was hardly less pale than his fainting charge, and who was now all covered with her blood, said to me in a deep, hoarse voice, 'Sergey Antonovitch, we shall never bring her thus alive into the fortress.'

"'I fear you are right, lieutenant,' I answered, and we instantly spurred our horses to the gallop.

"At the ready gates of the fortress we were received by the whole garrison and a multitude of people ; we immediately transported the unhappy Khalila to the quarters of her Zadonskoi, while we despatched half-a-dozen soldiers at once to institute a search for our rarely required surgeon, and who was generally asleep in his room over a brandy-bottle. Although drunk, as he usually was, unless in the act of getting so or getting sober again (the principal occupations of his life), he soon came, and hastily looking at the wound, he at once pronounced that it was impossible that she could live beyond the day ; however, he was mistaken."

"And she recovered ?" I hastily asked of the Schtabz-Capitan, while putting my hand familiarly upon his shoulder, with an involuntary expression of interest and pleasure.

"Just so—not exactly," replied he : "but the surgeon had made an error only as to time ; professionally, indeed, and when I could keep him from the brandy-flask, he was a man of talent ; however, our poor fading flower continued still to breathe for two days longer."

"Pray tell me, sir," I inquired of the old officer, "how did Youzbash contrive to succeed in his murderous attempt ?"

"Just so : woman like, and regardless of advice and prohibition, she had left the fortress during our absence at the accursed boar-hunt, to wander alone by the river-side. I must tell you that the weather was oppressively warm ; she had seated herself, we were told, on a large stone, and, child-like as ever, played with her tiny feet in the stream. Youzbash must have been watching the poor girl from a contiguous ambush. It appears that he stealthily approached from behind and fell upon her, stopping her shrieks by wrapping her huge veil round her head violently, and that he then dragged her towards the cover of an adjacent thicket,

where his horse was fastened. To place her in front of his saddle and to mount, was, with the robber, dexterous in every villany, but the work of an instant, and he was off with his ill-fated burden at full speed. She had, however, succeeded in sufficiently disengaging herself to cry for help, and the sentries who had witnessed the last part of the outrage from the walls had fired upon the freebooter; but fearing to wound Khalila, and their mark being nearly out of musket range, they might have saved their cartridges. One of these reports, however, was the ominous discharge we had heard, which hurried our party onwards to the neighbourhood of the fort, though only in time to assist after the catastrophe."

"But what was the motive, Schtabz-Capitan, that induced the freebooter to attempt this second abduction of the fated girl?" I demanded.

"God bless you!" was his response: "these Tscherkessian people, every man of them, are such incarnate thieves, that what lies loose they cannot help taking with them, by a kind of innate instinct; there are many things they do not want, and which could not be of any possible use or advantage to any one, and yet they cannot help laying their hands upon them. This propensity, I suppose, must account for his attempting to carry off a woman: besides, there is no doubt that the miscreant had been far more attached to her than his rugged nature chose to allow, and the vindictive assassin thus revenged himself upon poor Khalila for his slighted passion—upon Fedor Romanovitch, for the ruin of his mistress—upon her brother Abdourza, and all her tribe, for the loss of Zilfoogar, his wondrous horse, the leading passion of his life—and perhaps upon me for the shot I had sent after him from the walls of the fort. Curses light upon him! his black heart easily found motives enough for his darker deeds."

"And poor Khalila died, then?"

"Just so, exactly; she did, indeed, poor drooping blossom! but she suffered immensely first, and we ourselves were nearly tired out of our lives in watching and attending on the wretched girl!

"At about ten o'clock that night she began, but very slowly, to recover her consciousness. We were silently and sadly sitting near the bed of the poor sufferer. Scarcely had she opened her wild dark eyes when she began to call for Zadonskoi.

"'I am here, dearest; ever near thee, my own *djanetchka*,'* replied he, tenderly, while taking her little hand in his.

"'Khalila will die, Fedor!' said she to him, in a low tremulous voice.

"We began to console her, telling her (God forgive us!) that the surgeon had positively undertaken to heal her wound; but she shook her head incredulously, and turned her pale face towards the wall: the poor child feared to die!

"Towards the middle of the night her mind began to wander. She had an attack of delirium, and her head was burning and throbbing, and her entire frame was trembling under a severe attack of fever consequent upon her hurt. She raved incoherently, and in the strangest language, of her murdered father and her wretched brother Abdourza; she wished to rise, too, from her bed, had we permitted her, and to run about upon the snowy summits of the mountains. Sometimes she would wish to return to her home; at others she fancied that those she raved about were in the room with us. We could with difficulty persuade her that Youzbash was not hiding there. She also spoke much of Zadonskoi, whom, however, she did not recognise—calling him to her in thrilling accents, and by the names of the most endearing

* Darling.

affection ; or, on the contrary, addressing him with reproaches for having so long neglected her, and accusing him of having ceased to love his own ' djanetchka.'

"Zadonskoi listened to her wild words in silence, and with his head buried in his hands ; but all the time I could not see a single tear-drop stealing from between his fingers. I would have given much to have seen but one. Could his worn heart no longer yield him even a tear, or was he wrestling with his feelings ? I cannot tell, indeed ; but as for me, never before, during my existence, had I witnessed a scene so heartrending and so sad.

"Towards the early morning the delirium began to abate, and in about an hour she suffered terribly from the reaction, and for some time afterwards she lay without moving, her spirit hovering between life and death, pale as the sheets, and so much weakened that her breathing was scarcely audible or perceptible ; but as the morning wore on she appeared to recover a little, and she now spoke to us, and, for the first time, sanely ; but still her leading idea was extravagant enough to us, though natural, perhaps, to her sex and to her creed. It was, indeed, one of those strange fancies which only occur to persons on the threshold of the grave ! She told us that she grieved she was not a Christian girl, because she felt that her soul would never meet and twine itself with that of her Fedor Romanovitch in paradise, and that another woman, she feared, would be his mistress there. I seriously thought of having her baptised in the Christian faith before her death. I spoke of this to Zadonskoi, who treated the subject with a marked coldness. I made her the same proposal : she looked on me with an air of helpless indecision, and kept me waiting a considerable time for a direct reply. At last she, however, gave me to understand that she would die in the belief of Mahomet, for that she was born in it, and that her father would drag her from the Christian paradise if she renounced

it. Thus passed the whole of that long and weary day. How our poor mountain maid had changed during the tardy flight of those lagging hours! Her pale cheeks were now sinking in; her eyes grew larger and larger, till they appeared almost unearthly in their size and lustre; and the delicate tracery of her chiselled features acquired that strangely sharp outline and pinched appearance peculiar to the dying; her lips were burning, though pale as her brow, while she incessantly complained of an inward fire that consumed her, which she described to us as though her breast was filled with molten lead.

"The following night set in, and we, neither of us, had yet closed our eyes, nor had we hitherto, indeed, moved from the bedside of the ill-fated Khalila. She was now suffering extreme agony; but if her pain decreased but for a moment, she would strive to persuade Zadonskoi, with all the endearing tenderness of her old devotion, that she felt considerably better, and that he would make her happy by laying his head upon her pillow and taking rest, kissing his hand the while, and keeping it in hers, as though she feared to lose sight of him even for an instant. But before the dawn of the ensuing day she began to sink rapidly; the icy hand of death was on her warm young heart, and she again began to be perturbed and restless. She tore off her bandages till her blood flowed anew. When the wound was with difficulty once more stanchd, the poor girl grew calmer for a space, and she asked Zadonskoi, in a low but impressive voice, to kiss her. He threw himself on his knees by her couch, lifting her drooping head reverently from the pillows, and with the gentleness of a mother impressed a long and fervent kiss upon her quivering lips. What must have been their feelings during that holy but heart-breaking moment! A year of life and mental anguish must have seemed compressed and concentrated in that one embrace. She encircled his neck feebly with her unwounded

and trembling arm, and gazed into his eyes for some time with an expression I shall never forget. It was as though she sought to entrust him with the care of her parting soul. Poor simple child of the mountains, she did well to die when she did. A fragile, loving, and impassioned heart like hers was never moulded to cope and battle with the coarse reality of this unfeeling world of ours. And I dare not think what would have become her fate if Fedor Romanovitch had deserted her in his wayward love of change! And this would have inevitably happened sooner or later.

"Till the middle of the following day she was free from pain and calm, but she was conscious of nothing that was passing around her. It was the lethargy of approaching dissolution, or, rather, it was death in life. However tormented by our surgeon with his drugs and applications, together with the regular dressing of her wound, which he insisted on, she seemed to be aware of nothing.

" 'For God's sake,' said I to him, 'let the poor girl die in peace! It is obvious to us all that she must depart from among us; it is even singular that she should still linger among the living; you have told us this yourself. Why annoy her fleeting spirit with all these unnecessary arrangements?'

" 'Each one to his profession, Sergey Antonovitch,' replied he; 'and I am but fulfilling a duty towards my conscience.'

"A little less conscience, and an equal economy in brandy, would have been far more pleasing to us all.

"About the middle of the day she came sufficiently to herself to become aware of a painful oppression from the heat, and of a tormenting and overpowering thirst. We opened all the windows; but the air outside was considerably warmer than that within the chamber. We put a quantity of ice around her bed, but our poor sufferer did not feel relieved. I knew too well, unhappily, that this unquenchable thirst was the foreboding and

infallible sign of her immediate death, and I whispered as much to Zadonskoi. She now spoke, but the words were her last. 'Water! water!' she cried, but the fatal death-rattle mingled with her dying voice, and she even partially raised herself from her bed.

"Fedor Romanovitch now grew pale as a spectre, snatched a glass of water from the table, and, leaning over her, poured a few drops between her parched lips. I closed my eyes and began to repeat a prayer: I don't now recollect which it was. Yes, my friend, I have witnessed much of death: I have seen people die in the hospitals by scores, and upon the field of battle; I have seen the dead and dying piled in heaps; but all that was nothing—nothing in comparison; and never affected me so much as the touching details of the death of this poor helpless girl, thus ruined and murdered by the villany of man, and left to die among us, unfriended and alone, and with none but rough soldiers round her to close her eyes at last. But I must confess there was something about her death that pained me sadly at the time. Throughout the whole period of her sufferings she never even once mentioned my name—not even before she died; nor did she seem to recognise me; and yet it seems to me, even now, that I loved the fated girl like a parent. However, it is all one, and God will forgive it her! And, besides, who and what was rough old Sergey Antonovitch Sorokin, that any one, far less the fairest flower that ever bloomed, should think of such as him, when her young soul must have been full of the bright spirits it would meet in heaven!

"Scarcely had those few drops of water passed her pale lips when she fell back upon her pillows. Once more and for the last time those wondrous eyes were fixed upon Zadonskoi, with the same never-to-be-forgotten expression of unspeakable tenderness; and they slowly drooped into eternity. As they closed, and while

the film of death stole over their wild brilliancy, she murmured his name—the sound was indistinct and half a sigh—but it was her last breath; and with it her young soul winged its way from the fair but now inanimate form before us; a mirror was placed before her lips, but not a breath tarnished its brightness: all, then, was over—Khalila was no more! the choicest gem of Circassia was a thing of clay.

“I led Zadonskoi away mechanically from the scene of sadness, and we mounted upon the ramparts of the fortress; I felt choking, and I longed for air. For a long while we walked up and down the walls side by side, with our arms behind us and without exchanging a single word. The features of the lieutenant wore no particular expression, though he looked pale almost as she whom we had just left. This almost annoyed me, for in his place I could have gone mad, or have died from sheer grief. At last he sat down upon a gun-carriage—the same where Khalila and I sat not long before—and he began to draw some figures in the sand with the point of his sword. I perceived that he knew not what he was doing, and I really pitied him from my soul. I drew near to him and placed my hand upon his shoulder, and uttered some few words of consolation, but he did not seem to hear me. I addressed him again, and after I had spoken for some few moments he abruptly lifted his head, looked me full in the face, and burst into a loud laugh.

“That hollow laugh made my blood run cold within my veins. I left him to himself—I could do nothing for him.

“I went to give orders for a grave. I must confess I took great interest in the simple obsequies of our gentle favourite: there was a quantity of old military gold lace in my quarters, and I had also some pieces of ornamental fringe; with those I caused her coffin to be decorated; and the pall, which was of rich Persian silk, I caused to be additionally embellished by the soldiers’

wives of the garrison with some rich Tscherkessian silver lace, which Fedor Romanovitch had procured for poor Khalila on her first arrival among us, and for far happier purposes.

"Early next morning, after the reveille, we brought her to her last resting-place outside the fortress, near her favourite walk by the little river—the very place, indeed, where the murdered innocent had been sitting last. The spot is covered now with blooming white acacias and wild roses: they were her favourite flowers, and I caused them to be planted round her lonely grave. I thought at first of placing a cross at her head, but that, of course, would never do, as I was told by the chaplain, for the unhappy Khalila was not a Christian; and he strongly reprobated, moreover, what he called my criminal interest in an abandoned infidel. God forgive me for differing with a learned servant of God, but I never could look upon Khalila in that light.

"We placed a square stone to mark her grave instead; and a soldier of the garrison, whom she had once begged off, upon her knees, from the punishment of the knout, which he had heartily merited, engraved upon it the simple word 'Khalila.'

"Sweet Khalila! her memory is like a lovely dream! may she rest in peace!"

"And what became of Zadonskoi?" asked I of the worthy old officer, who was evidently much affected with these reminiscences.

"The lieutenant was ill for a considerable time," he answered; "he grew thin and haggard, poor fellow, and he never left the walls after the tragical end of his beautiful mistress; and by a kind of tacit understanding between us her name was never mentioned: I saw that it was most painful to him, even to light suddenly upon any little memento that put him in mind of the unhappy girl.

"Three months later, and, I believe, through powerful interest

he possessed, and which he had now set on foot in his favour, he obtained his exchange: he was ordered to join another regiment, the advanced battalions of which were quartered in Georgia; and he soon after left us for that province. Since then we have never met; but I recollect now, that some one told me the lieutenant had returned to Russia; but I cannot tell positively, and I did not read his name in the lists; besides we always receive our news too late here in the Caucasus."

And upon this the Schtabz-Capitan entered into an elaborate dissertation upon the inconvenience that arose in his particular service, from receiving news and papers a whole year later than was necessary; and conjecturing that the purpose of the government might perhaps be to weaken the impression of all painful communications upon the minds of the isolated military quartered in those far and savage districts.

I did not contradict him, nor listen indeed to his opinions on these matters with any particular attention; my thoughts were still too much engrossed with the melancholy history he had just related to me.

An hour later, and we recommenced our journey. The storm had by this time abated, the sky began to look more promising and cheerful, and we again set forth on the road. But I could not forget the subject, and I involuntarily brought our conversation again upon the sad episode of Khalila and Zadonskoi.

"Have you ever heard," said I, "commandant, what became of Youzbash?"

"Of Youzbash I really know nothing for certain. I have, however, been told that in the right wing of the Schapsug-Tscherkesses, there is a fellow serving of the same name—a desperate villain, it would seem—who, in his red *besmet* and showy arms, dashes about on a remarkable horse, of a coal-black

colour, under our very fire, with his *shashka* in hand, politely bowing when the bullets are whistling their merriest about his ears. God knows whether it is the same; and whether the scoundrel has recovered his Zilfoogar! but many incredible stories are told about his horse, and certainly the coincidence is singular enough."

In Koba, I took leave of Sergey Antonovitch Sorokin, and I felt really grieved in bidding the simple-hearted veteran adieu; but I was travelling on post-haste, and the Schtabz-Capitan had heavy baggage to convey; hence it was a necessary evil, and I bade him farewell. We could hardly hope, under the circumstances, to meet again; nevertheless, we did so, and an account of how it happened, and what thereupon took place, will be found in another chapter.

CHAPTER III.

FEDOR ROMANOVITCH ZADONSKOI.

HAVING thus parted with the Schtabz-Capitan Sergey Antonovitch Sorokin, I now hurried onwards to make up for lost time; and so, in a short space, quickly passed the ravines of Terek, crossed those of Darjal, made a capital breakfast at Kasbeck, took tea in Larsa, and partook of an excellent supper in Upper Caucasia. I will spare my reader all the descriptions of mountain phenomena and scenery, which here presented no particularly interesting features, though I had diligently made notes of every mile of ground I travelled over, as these pictures do not, I fear, possess anything very attractive, especially for those who never have visited these distant regions; nor will I inflict my statistical observations upon them, for though they would probably admit

that they looked very respectable, they would most undoubtedly not be read.

I here stopped at a miserable inn, to the tender mercies of which all travellers are in general compelled to succumb, and where in the meantime no one was to be found who could boil an egg properly or cook a potato; for the three old soldiers to whom the care of the place was intrusted, were so irredeemably stupid or so particularly drunk, that it was quite impossible to arrive at anything satisfactory, in a culinary sense or otherwise, at this most sorry of hostelryes.

They nevertheless, to my horror, informed me that I should inevitably have to stay about three days, more or less, with them, in order to wait for the "*occasion*," as it is called, from Ecatherinograd, which it seems had not yet arrived, and consequently I could not continue my journey, notwithstanding my impatience at the delay, and my disgust at the place of sojourn. The weather was still execrable, and the time weighed heavily upon me as the leaden mantle of the hypocrite in the "*Inferno*" of Dante. I determined, in default of better employment, to note down the history I had so lately heard of the unhappy Khalila from my military fellow-traveller. I did it from sheer *ennui*, and perhaps to a certain degree from the interest that the sad fate of the poor mountain girl had awakened in me, and certainly without imagining for a moment that that melancholy tale would become the connecting link of a long chain of circumstances which were fated to be brought under my knowledge. Thus I whiled away the time before the arrival of the "*occasion*."

It may not, perhaps, be understood what the word "*occasion*," as used in that part of the Caucasus, signifies. It is simply an escort, consisting of a small detachment of generally half a company of infantry, with a piece of light mountain ordnance,

which protects the convoys of government stores and provisions, and also travellers and their baggage, through turbulent Kabarda, from Upper Caucasia to Ecatherinograd, and without which, at certain times and places, voyagers are not allowed to proceed.

My first day of weary detention at last drew to its close; early the next morning, to my great satisfaction, a heavily-laden *telega* rolled into the court-yard, and my pleasure was redoubled when I found that it contained the worthy Schtabz-Capitan himself, whom I had so lately parted from, and, as we both naturally thought, for ever. We met like old friends. I offered him my room—the only decent one in the establishment. He stood on no ceremony, but accepted my offer, and even condescended to slap me on the shoulder, and to twist or untwist his grim features into a smile of friendly *bonhomie*. He was, indeed, an original in his way. But, better still, Sergey Antonovitch had picked up in his campaigns a tolerable knowledge of practical gastronomics: he was a second Soyer at roasting a pheasant, and I never knew his equal to give the exact flavour to its necessary adjunct of cucumber sauce; and I must confess that without the old soldier's kindly though “*ungentle ministering*,” I should have been reduced to fare on dry bread, to escape the culinary enormities of that atrocious inn.

A bottle of excellent Kalitian wine helped us to philosophise upon the modest number of our dishes, which consisted, indeed, but of one; and, after dinner, we lit our pipes, and disposed ourselves for meditation. I sat close to the window, and the worthy veteran next to the fire, as it was a damp and cold day, like the preceding one. We were silent. What were we to speak about, indeed? He had told me already everything that was in any way interesting concerning himself, and, for my part, I had nothing that I chose to relate or speak about; for I had dis-

covered that we had very few ideas and opinions in common. I rose in despair, and gazed forth from the cobwebbed window upon the scene before me. Numerous little low-roofed houses were strewn everywhere, as if by accident, on the rugged banks of the wild Terek, the bed of which, increasing in breadth as it receded from the town, appeared in the distance as a considerable river, until it was lost in the gloomy depths of a thick forest beyond; and still farther towards the horizon, the purple tints of the far mountain peaks were visible. From behind their azure and dreamy barrier the small and distant town of Kasbeck was peeping forth. Perched upon some mountain behind this nearer chain, and with the setting sun gleaming upon its white walls, it would have reminded a poet of a pearl set among sapphires. I bade it silently a long farewell; for I liked the place, though I had never been there, knew nothing of it, and though it was so far from me. Reader! did you ever feel such mysterious sympathies with distant places and unknown people? If you have not, I pity you.

We were thus silent, and manfully pulling at our pipes for some time. The sun was now setting fast behind the hills, and the usual cold white fog was spreading its filmy veil over the plains, when we suddenly heard the welcome sounds of the horse-bells of a travelling carriage in the street, as usual accompanied by the vociferous shouts of the drivers. A few *telegas*, guided by dirty and ragged Armenians, were now drawn into the courtyard of the establishment, followed by an empty and open travelling-carriage—its light and easy but solid construction, and elegant appearance, had quite a foreign look in this wild place. This vehicle was followed by a tall man with a long mustache, in an elaborately frogged and embroidered Hungarian pelisse, more than handsomely dressed for a servant, which he undoubtedly was, and it was impossible, indeed, to mistake his avocation, even

while merely observing the air of importance and authority with which he was now shaking the ashes from his meerschaum, and shouting to the yamtchieks. Undoubtedly he was the confidential courier of an indolent master. He did not bear much resemblance, certainly, to the humble, docile, and subservient Russian Figaro.

"Hallo! my friend," shouted I to the fellow from the open window, "tell me is this the 'occasion' which has just now arrived?" He looked rather impertinently at me for a moment, coolly arranged his cravat, and deliberately turned away; an Armenian, however, who was following from behind, smiled civilly, and replied in his stead that the "occasion" had in fact arrived, and that by the next morning it would again proceed.

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Sergey Antonovitch on approaching nearer to the window. "Why, what a retinue!—what a superb carriage, too," added he; no doubt it must be some high official proceeding to hold a court of inquiry of some kind at Tiflis. It is apparent, though, that he does not know exactly what our mountains are made of; they will render but a melancholy account of that flimsy vehicle of his, and they will soon leave him nothing to ride on but the broken fragments of his wheel-spokes, if he likes to get astride on them, like a child on its father's walking-stick. But who can the owner be? Let us try and get a sight of him."

We passed into the corridor, and at the end of it we found an open door leading into a back room. The servant we have before mentioned, with the assistance of the drivers and others, was busily engaged carrying some portmanteaus and luggage of different kinds into the house.

"Hark ye! my friend," demanded the Schtabz-Capitan, "to whom belongs this travelling-carriage? it is certainly a very handsome affair."

The courier did not, however, deign to turn round ; he murmured something that was unintelligible to us, and began to open and examine his packages. The old officer now became somewhat nettled at this cavalier treatment, and touching the rude menial on the shoulder he said to him—

“I am speaking to you, my man : whose carriage, I say, is that yonder.”

“My master’s.”

“And who the devil is your master?”

“Prince Fedor Romanovitch Zadonskoi, captain of ——”

“What!—what did you say? Zadonskoi! Fedor Romanovitch Zadonskoi! Oh! this is indeed an unexpected pleasure. How is he?—is he still in the service?—is he now here to serve in the Caucasus?” demanded in one breath the hearty old soldier, while pulling me by the sleeve, as though he expected me to reciprocate his gratification at the intelligence. His face was literally glowing in its joyful expression.

“Sir, I know very little of my master’s affairs, and I have not been very long with him,” answered the fellow with scarcely less insolence.

“Just so—exactly—just so : my old friend, Fedor Romanovitch! That is his Christian name, and his father’s, too, my fine fellow ; we are intimate friends, your master and I,” added he in his hilarious excitement, striking the courier a heavy slap on the shoulder, “what brings him at present into this part of the world?”

“Allow me, sir—you are hindering me,” answered the courier, sulkily.

“You are an insolent fellow,” returned the old soldier. “Do you know that your master is one of my best friends, and that I shall inform him of your impertinence? But where is he at present himself?”

The servant informed him that the Prince Zadonskoi had remained for supper, and most probably would remain for the night, with the Colonel N——, the commandant of the place.

"But will he not call in here during the course of the evening?" inquired the anxious veteran. "Or, look you here, my man; will you not be going to your master for something or another, by and by? If so, just take an opportunity of whispering to him this—simply this—that 'Sergey Antonovitch is here in the town;' say no more, mind, but that 'Sergey Antonovitch is here;' he will understand. And observe, my friend, I will give you—yes, I will give you half a rouble to drink his health with."

The servant screwed his face into an expression of extreme contempt, on hearing the modest guerdon offered to him. The poor officer little dreamed that the courier's wages probably exceeded his pay by at least one-half; however, he promised to deliver the message at his first opportunity.

"You will see—you will see; he will be here at once!" said the simple, old Schtabz-Capitan to me, with the air of a conqueror. "I shall go and wait for him outside the house. Ah! what a pity it is, to be sure, that I am not an acquaintance of Colonel N——."

Sergey Antonovitch took his place impatiently on a bench outside the inn door, and I went up-stairs to my own room. I must confess I was myself somewhat anxious to witness the arrival of Zadonskoi, although, according to the account the old Schtabz-Capitan had given me of him, the impression he had made upon me was anything but a favourable one; yet some traits, nevertheless, of his character seemed to me sufficiently original and interesting. An hour later, and one of the bibulous transgressors of our invalid trio, brought in a boiling urn, and the other necessities towards the concoction of that greatest of all comforts—tea.

"Sergey Antonovitch ; what say you to some tea ?" shouted I out of the window, which I had opened for the purpose.

"I thank you—no ; I don't care for anything just now."

"Ah, bah !" I continued ; "just one glass. Look here ; it's getting late and cold."

"Never mind, I had rather not ; I thank you all the same."

"Just as you like," I responded, as I closed the window ; and I took my tea alone. Ten minutes later, however, the veteran entered the room, with a somewhat elongated countenance saying to me—

"You are right : it is better to have a glass of warm tea, such an evening as this ; and I am already half-frozen. His servant went long ago for him ; but, no doubt, something important prevents him from coming just yet."

With this he suddenly emptied his glass, declining a second one, and hurried at once to his post, outside, in the cold, but, it appeared to me, in a somewhat uneasy mood : it was obvious enough that the worthy old man was annoyed, and a little piqued, at the carelessness evinced by Zadonskoi about the meeting, and the more so, perhaps, that he had but so recently spoken to me of their great former intimacy ; and, indeed, but an hour before, he had assured me that his dear friend would hasten into his arms on hearing his name, in less than a quarter of an hour.

It was now getting late and dark, when I once more opened my window, and called for Sergey Antonovitch, observing, that it was almost time to retire for the night : he murmured something, which I could not catch, between his teeth ; I repeated my suggestion, but he gave me no reply.

I laid myself down upon the sofa, wrapped in my travelling cloak, leaving the candle still lighted on a shelf. I soon began to slumber, and I should no doubt have continued to do so, if

Sergey Antonovitch, in entering the room, and at a very late hour, as it appeared to me, had not wakened me again. He threw his Kabardian pipe upon the table roughly, though it was an especial favourite, and began to pace up and down the room, every now and then poking the fire savagely; at last he also threw himself down; but for a considerable time I heard the restless Schtabz-Capitan turning about on his bed, with all the uneasiness apparently of one of the suffering souls in quaint Quevedo's Spanish purgatory. The Caucasus is perhaps the head-quarters of all domestic nocturnal entomology; which made me call out to my restless friend:

"Do the light cavalry trouble you, Schtabz-Capitan?"

"Yes! No! that is, just so—exactly," replied he, with a heavy sigh. "Good night!"

The next morning I awoke early; but the old officer had long anticipated me. I found him up and dressed, and at his post before the house.

"I must go and see the commandant," said he, hurriedly, as soon as I appeared; "therefore, be good enough to send for me if my friend Zadonskoi should arrive."

I promised him that I would do so. He was off immediately, and running as if his old limbs had once more recovered their former youthful strength and elasticity.

The morning was cool and refreshing; golden clouds were heaped upon the mountains, as it were, and lit the firmament to the extremest verge of the horizon; the air was balmy and invigorating as a spring morning. An open square was before the inn; behind it a bazaar, full of a lively and noisy crowd, busy about their purchases, as it was Sunday morning; bare-footed Ossetian boys and girls, in every variety of tatters, carrying huge jars of metheglin upon their shoulders, were crowding importunately about me; I wished them far off, for I

had as little taste for their suspicious vicinity as for their national beverage. I began almost in my utter *ennui* to sympathise with the uneasiness of the old officer.

Ten minutes had scarcely elapsed, when, at the furthest corner of the square, the man appeared whom we were now both so anxiously expecting. He was accompanied by the Commandant N——, who, having walked with him as far as the inn, bade him farewell, and returned to the fortress. I immediately despatched one of the three soldiers in search of Sergey Antonovitch.

Zadonskoi was met by his courier, who informed him obsequiously that the horses would be instantly put to the carriage according to his orders, at the same time presenting him a box of cigarettes; and after receiving a few further instructions, the man proceeded to hurry on the preparations for their immediate departure. His master languidly lit his cigarette, yawned once or twice, and sat himself upon the opposite bench to mine, on the other side of the inn gate. Now is the time for me to pourtray him to you; for, had I been an artist, I might easily have made a sketch of him; and so much did he seem to be abstracted in his own thoughts, that I do not think he would have even been aware that he was giving me what is technically called a "sitting."

He was a patrician-looking young man, of a stature slightly above the medium standard, but the elegant slenderness of his person gave him the appearance of being considerably taller; his expansive chest, and the breadth of his shoulders, however, denoted a strong constitution, equally well fitted to withstand the fatigues and vicissitudes of a soldier's life, of ever-varying service and change of climate, or the insidious effects, both upon the wearied mind and jaded body, of a career of excessive dissipation, such as I had, indeed, been led to understand he had

gone through; his dusty black velvet travelling-coat, fastened carelessly by the two lower buttons, displayed the irreproachable whiteness and delicacy of his linen, that peculiar characteristic of the man of the best society; his gloves, scarcely less clean, seemed, in their exquisite fit, as if made for his small and aristocratic hands; but when he happened to draw off one of them, I was surprised to remark the extreme meagreness of his long, white fingers. His walk—for he had now risen from the bench—was careless and indolent; but I observed that he did not sway his arms to and fro, as most men do more or less; and this peculiar stillness of the limbs, when the whole person is otherwise in motion, I consider to be an indisputable sign of a reserved character. However, these are but ideas of my own, based, no doubt upon certain experience, but which I by no means would presume to expect others to subscribe. When he had once more seated himself upon the same bench, he did so with a sudden motion of peevishness and utter lassitude, that was almost feminine, and he lay there for some time as though collapsed, as if every bone had been extracted from his body; he put me in mind—and I could hardly forbear smiling at the idea—of one of Balzac's *coquettes sur le retour*, buried in her luxurious cushions, and suffering all the reaction and languor of the *après bal*.

Glancing at his countenance, at first sight I would not have given him more than twenty-five summers; but on a second inspection I could mark the traces of full thirty years. In his smile there were something particularly winning. His somewhat pale complexion had a tint of even womanly delicacy; and the luxuriance of his fair and naturally curling locks relieved advantageously the massive breadth of his broad and noble forehead, upon which it was only after a minute examination that the traces of slight wrinkles, intersecting one another here and there,

could be traced, but they would obviously have appeared more strongly marked in his moments of anger, or of moral or physical suffering. Though his hair was fair, his mustaches and his thick eyebrows were dark—a sign of nobility in the human being, as is evinced in the black mane and tail upon the white, grey, or cream-coloured horse of the Ukraine. And to conclude my rather prolix description, I will only say that his nose was rather *retroussé*, but full of character; his teeth were of dazzling brilliancy, and his eyes of a very light brown colour, restless and uneasy; but about his eyes was a remarkable peculiarity worth recording.

They did not smile, but had rather a contrary expression when his lips did so. Has it ever happened, to you, reader, to have witnessed such a disagreeable phenomenon in any one? It is, in my opinion, either a sign of the existence of evil passions hidden by an habitual duplicity, or of a deep and settled grief. Assuredly, I should misdoubt the possessor of such eyes. I might, perhaps, have been prejudiced by what I had heard of the disposition and temperament of the wayward being whose lineaments I was scanning so narrowly—but, nevertheless, I am always prepared to think the worst of a face in which I can trace any contradiction of expression. His eyes, I could perceive, were very bright—but it was obviously neither the effect of a vivid imagination, or of a light heart—it was the brightness of steel—brilliant but cold. His glance was restless, penetrating, and suspicious, leaving an unpleasant impression of the anxious inquisitiveness of a mind ill at ease with itself and with all mankind. Our eyes met several times, and I should have fancied that his wore a look of insolence but for the perfect calmness and self-possession that pervaded them.

I may have watched the lover of poor Khalila pretty closely, yet all this struck me, perhaps, for the simple reason that I knew

some singular passages of his former life, and with any one not so informed his appearance would probably have had a different effect.

The horses were by this time harnessed to his carriage, the bells attached to their necks were tinkling gaily, and the courier of Zadonski had already twice informed him that everything was prepared for immediate departure—but Sergey Antonovitch had not as yet made his appearance. Zadonskoi, however, was fortunately still buried in deep reflection, his eyes fixed in dreamy abstraction upon the far and purple peaks of the Caucasian mountains, and he appeared in no haste whatever to continue his journey. I rose, and approaching him I addressed him thus :—

“If you would like to wait but a little longer, sir, you would have the gratification of meeting with an old friend.”

“Ah! indeed,” replied he quickly: “I think I was told so yesterday; but where is he?”

We here both looked around us—and at the further extremity of the square I perceived the worthy old Sergey Antonovitch approaching us and at full speed. A few moments later and he had joined us, quite out of breath, while the perspiration was coursing in large drops down his honest face; the few locks of his iron-grey hair, which the ruthless scissors of the Imperial War-office suffered to appear from under his foraging cap, were sticking to his forehead; his knees were trembling with his late exertion, and he was evidently on the point of throwing himself round the neck of Zadonskoi; but the latter, with a half-amused and half-gratified smile, stretched forth his hand to receive him by way of greeting, but rather coolly. The Schtabz-Capitan was startled for a moment, but regardless of the tacit rebuff, caught hold of the outstretched hand in both of his; but he could not even yet speak from excitement and want of breath.

"I am very glad to see you, my dear Sergey Antonovitch! And how do you get on?" said Zadonskoi, languidly.

"And you—how are you, my dear boy? Are you happier since you left us?" stammered the veteran, with tears in his eyes; "are you on your promotion? have you gained a step since you were with us?"

"Oh! ah! yes, the cursed service," said Zadonskoi, as if with difficulty recollecting what he meant: "it was an infernal bore, commandant, so I sent it to the devil long ago!"

"Is it possible?—is it possible?" exclaimed the old officer, apparently electrified at this summary disposal of all that he held most sacred in the world. "But what are you doing, then—where are you going to now?"

"Oh! I—I think I am going to Persia, Afghanistan—possibly further even."

"Surely not immediately! Nay, stay a little, my dearest Zadonskoi!—we cannot surely part so soon? It is so long since we met! and I have so much to ask—so much to tell you."

"I am in haste, Sergey Antonovitch," was the somewhat cold response.

"Good God! what can you have to attend to if you do not even care for the service?" demanded the Schtabz-Capitan, in utter bewilderment. "But what have you been doing lately—a n where have you been living?"

"In *ennui*!" replied Zadonskoi, smiling.

"But you do not ask after your old comrades," pursued the officer. "Have you so soon, then, forgotten our stirring life and all our doings in the old fortress? That was the place for hunting the Tscherkessians, and the wild boars—eh! Zadonskoi? Ah! you used to be a desperate sportsman in those days. And poor Khalila!"

Zadonskoi grew pale as death, and turned aside.

"Yes—yes—I remember," said he, with an involuntary sigh, to suppress which he bit his lips till the blood came: "an ungodly hole it was, the provisions were always stale and fit for nothing but to feed soldiers and moodjüks; the sergeant-major, too, smelt most atrociously of onions for everlasting, and the surgeon and chaplain were always drunk—a most abominable place!"

The honest Soltabz-Capitan was fairly dumb-founded; but after a short, embarrassed pause, he again began to insist that his cynical young friend should stay at least for a couple of hours.

"We shall have an excellent dinner, I promise you," said he; "I have secured a brace of superb pheasants, and I will make the cucumber-sauce myself,"—(here Zadonskoi shrugged his shoulders)—"and as for the Kahitian wine, you will find it excellent here; not so good, perhaps, as in Georgia, nevertheless palatable, and as fair at any rate as we can get it. We shall have a long chat about old times. I shall tell you all I have been doing since. Do you know, I myself expect promotion next year, and you will tell me something of your life and pleasures in St. Petersburg:"—and here he rubbed his hands with an expectant glee that was almost boyish.

"Really, I have nothing to speak about, my good commandant," said Zadonskoi, coldly, and with great deliberation. "However, fare you well; I am late already I perceive; I must depart, and I thank you for not having altogether forgotten me," added he, in taking the veteran's hand in his.

The old soldier drew his shaggy eyebrows together. He was now really hurt and angry, although he strove manfully to hide these feelings.

"Forget! young man," exclaimed he, "I have forgotten nothing—notling, not even the fatherly regard and the unvarying kindness I have ever shown you. However, go your way, and

may God be with you, and forgive you!—but I did not think I should meet you thus.”

“Well, now then, now then,” said Zadonskoi, touched by the emotion his heartlessness had awakened. “Come, come, commandant, exclaimed he,” as he now warmly and almost by main force embraced him, “am I really so much changed? If I am, whatever you may please to call me, do me the justice to own that I was always so: I cannot help it; we all have characters as we have noses, I have either too much or too little. But I must really leave you: do not be angry; but every one has his road in life, and ours diverge widely. Adieu! we may perhaps never meet again; but God bless you! and he alone knows. Adieu!”

Whilst thus speaking rapidly he had already got into his carriage, and the driver having made his last arrangements had clambered to his seat and was ready to start.

“Halt there! wait, stop!” suddenly shouted Sergey Antonovitch, as he seized hold of the carriage-door, and gesticulated to the driver who was gathering up his reins. “I nearly forgot all about it, Zadonskoi; I have taken care of some of your papers, which you left in quarters in the fortress; I sealed them up, but I knew not where to send them to, and I was even now carrying them with me, thinking that I might possibly hear of or would meet with you in Georgia. Providence has, however, brought us together sooner than I anticipated. Wait but five minutes, and I will fetch them.”

“Impossible, my good Schtabz-Capitan!” was the rejoinder; “I could not wait that incalculable period for the private memoirs of King Cheops, and all the Ptolemy’s, done on the best papyrus—which I could as soon read, by the way, as all that abominable ‘*escrivallerie*’ of mine.”

“Just so, exactly; but they appear to be all about your own private affairs,” urged the astonished old officer.

"They are indeed, commandant," was the response; "they form the history of my life, the records of all I would forget, the associations of all I am now flying from, and you would have me carry them with me, like the flying horseman of Horace with his *Remora* on the crupper. Farewell! Farewell!"

"But what the devil am I to do with them, then?" inquired the bewildered ex-commandant, as his eccentric friend's carriage began to move.

"Light your pipe with them, my good friend," said Zadonskoi, leaning from the window, with a bitter smile: "let them end in air, and smoke, and nausea, as they began—a fitting termination for blighted hopes and fevered dreams."

"As you will," said the Schtabz-Capitan, as much puzzled as ever; "just as you please. But I say, Fedor Romanovitch! my dear boy, did you say it was Persia you are about to visit? But how shall I hear of you?—when will you return?" These last inquiries were made at the top of his voice, as his friend's travelling-carriage was already at some distance. Zadonskoi merely made a sign with his hand from the window—all that could be seen of him—to which the following meaning might have been attributed by a keen observer: "I neither know nor care; perhaps never! Why should I return? and, at any rate, don't bore me any further!"

The merry jingling of the post-horse bells had already lost much of their silvery sound, and the carriage was now nearly out of sight; but the poor old officer was still standing immoveably in the same place, lost in deep contemplation, and with his eyes fixed on the vehicle that was so rapidly bearing away his old favourite.

"Yes—just so, exactly!" said he to me at last, folding his arms athwart his broad chest, and striving to assume an air of

calm and pensive equanimity, though the hot tears of vexation and wounded feeling were at times starting from his honest eyes, and even rolling upon his bronzed cheeks.

"To be sure, Fedor Romanovitch Zadonskoi, we have been friends : but what of that ?—what are friends in these days ? What could poor old Sergey Antonovitch be to him ? I am not rich, nor titled, nor handsome, and even in years I am not his equal ; and the old fortress was an abominable hole, too ; and I, who treated him like a father when I might have broken him fifty times : and the service was not good enough for him it appears, since he has again revisited St. Petersburg ! What a stupendous carriage ! what a conglomeration of luggage—a general's wife wouldn't carry more—and what a magnificent scoundrel his servant !" These words were pronounced with a smile of ironical bitterness.

"Tell me," continued he, turning somewhat short and sharply upon me, as if he half suspected I was enjoying his mortification, "what do you think of all this ?" He did not, however, wait for my opinion, but proceeded in the same strain. "I wonder what devil's freak now takes him into Persia ! Something without a grain of common sense or proper principle, I'll warrant ; and because I can't understand his absurdities he thinks me an old peasant, I suppose, and treats me as one. Why, I have sat up whole nights with that young man, sir, when he was suffering ; I have bound his wounds, I have tended him and his like an old woman, for I loved him, perhaps, because he was so unlike myself."

I ventured to suggest to the irritated veteran, that the fault of Zadonskoi might to some extent be attributed to a continued affectation, which had almost become a reality, rather than to any radical evil of the heart ; but his nature was too honest and simple to be able even to comprehend the extent to which the



"He began hurriedly to rummage the contents of his portmanteau; at last he took out a moderately-sized packet and threw it with an air of contempt on the ground."

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human animal can be carried by continued simulation and natural adaptability.

"No, no!" said he, shaking his grey head ominously; "but never mind—it will come back to him some day. Fortune will not smile for ever upon those who can forget an old comrade!"

I would have contradicted him on that point had it been necessary.

However, he had turned away to hide his agitation, and proceeded into the court-yard of the inn to look after his baggage carts, and upon the feeble pretence of a minute examination of the wheels of his *telega*, whilst all the time his eyes were dimmed by the repressed tears of wounded feeling and keen humiliation.

"Sergey Antonovitch," said I, approaching him, as much to change his train of thought as anything else, "what are these same papers that Zadonskoi has left with you?"

"The devil only knows what they are about!—some balderdash, I suppose."

"And what do you intend doing with them?"

"What I shall do with them! I shall use them as wadding for my rifle."

"Give them rather to me, Schtabz-Capitan," said I.

He looked upon me for a moment with surprise,—muttered something by way of response, and began hurriedly to rummage the contents of his portmanteau. At last he took out a moderately-sized packet, and throw it, with an air of contempt, on the ground; then another with greater violence, a third, and so on until a tenth appeared, which shared the same fate, only more violently than the preceding ones. In his anger there was something puerile, though its thorough nature and genuine simplicity were charming. I could not help smiling, though I felt pained.

"There is the whole of the precious trash," said he. "I congratulate you on the acquisition!"

"And I may do with them whatever I like, Schtabz-Capitan?"

"Publish them, even, if you please," he responded. "What's that to me! do *I* care about him? am *I* his friend or his relative, I should like to know? It is true we lived together like father and son, and have been under fire together a dozen times,—what has that to do with it? why should any one care for the isolated, stupid old officer? There, take them away."

I gathered the papers hastily together, and made off with my prize to my own room, for fear my worthy fellow-traveller should change his mind. Soon after this little scene, one of the invalid custodians of our unsavoury place of detention hobbled up to us as fast as his crutches and his morning drams would allow him, to inform us, that the long desiderated "*occasion*" would most infallibly march through the town within an hour. We had no time to lose, then, and I ordered my horses to be immediately attached to the *telega*. The honest commandant now entered my room, just at the moment when my arrangements were all nearly completed, and that I had placed my travelling-cap upon my head; he seemed, to my surprise, to be quite unprepared to continue his journey,—he seemed troubled, and there was something reserved and cold in his manner.

"Why, what are you about, Sergey Antonovitch? are you not going to set out?" said I.

"No."

"And why so?"

"I,—the fact is, I—I have not exactly seen the commandant of the fortress here yet; and, you see,—just so—there was an infernal quantity of crown property to deliver."

"But you have been to see him, surely, if I recollect?"

"Just so, exactly; I have been," said he, with increasing embarrassment: "but the fact is, that he was not in the fortress at the time, and—and—I did not like to wait for him."

I understood it all at once.—Poor old Sergey Antonovitch! It was no doubt the first time in his life that he had been guilty of a dereliction of duty for his personal gratification. He had, perhaps, been reprimanded—might, indeed, be even then under arrest in the town;—how bitterly, too, he had been deceived in the motive for which he had exposed himself to animadversion!

“I am very sorry—very sorry indeed—my dear Sergey Antonovitch,” said I to him, “that we should have to part thus unexpectedly.”

“Of course,” he rejoined: “how are we uncivilised old men to keep pace with you? You are young people of the world, it seems, and proud as Lucifer besides; when you are *en penitence*, and sent among us plain soldiers in the mountains for your follies, and whilst you are still under the apprehension of Tscherkessian bullets, you are here and there on the *alerts* with us, and are good comrades enough; but if we happen to meet you later in life, you are as ashamed to hear the manly voice that first taught you to stand steady under fire as you are to stretch out your hand in answer to a soldier’s welcome.”

“Do I deserve this reproach, Sergey Antonovitch?”

“Just so, not exactly, perhaps; but pardon me, you see I have my own ways of speaking; however, I wish you all good fortune, and a pleasant journey.”

I held out my hand towards him, and he took it rather coldly, but suddenly gave me a hearty grip that made my fingers ache for an hour afterwards, as he quickly turned upon his heel and left the room.

We parted thus, then, and rather coolly. Excellent, simple Sergey Antonovitch, he had once again become the stern, obstinate, and irritable Schtabz-Capitan. And what was it all about? For the simple reason, that his aristocratic friend Zadonskoi, in a moment of extra-cynical affectation, pre-occupation, or from any

other cause, had merely tendered him his hand, when the veteran would fain have fallen around his neck!

Alas! how true it is that we are the utter creatures of our feelings; and that that which piques our *amour propre*, our vanity, our jealousy, or any other of our tender and assailable points, wounds us far deeper at the time—and when emanating from those we love—than an obvious and palpable injury; while the wreck of a cherished illusion causes us a keener pang at the moment than a real loss of absolute and positive importance.

Ah! these illusions, these illusions, how they mislead us through existence!

“E quando il vergognoso error a scoprir comincia
Allor se muore!”

But in youth, however, even when the first freshness of feeling peculiar to early manhood has almost faded to extinction—even when the first rose-coloured haze has been scattered from before the dreaming eyes, through which we have so long gazed idly upon the actions and the feelings of mankind—there may, nevertheless, be a charm or so still left to cheer us on our awakening to partial reality,—that is to say, we change our false idols, we give our old illusions, those magic-lanterns of our lives, for new ones, and, like the people who purchased the lamps of Aladdin, we may even gain by the barter,—for those last illusions are less perishable if less brilliant and attractive.

But, again, when those last and most cherished deceptions are rudely torn away from the heart that is prematurely old, bruised, ruined, and depressed, or as roughly displaced from the lonely heart that has beaten for fifty summers in its self-world of isolation, as was the case with the suffering veteran,—all for the time then seems lost, and the heart involuntarily shrinks and closes upon itself.

And so I drove off alone.

CHAPTER IV.

PRINCESS ANASTASIA.

(FROM THE PAPERS OF ZADONSKOI.)

I ARRIVED yesterday at Pjatigorod, and established myself in apartments at the end of the town towards the foot of the Mashouk, during a tempest, which I am told is no unusual occurrence here. I shall have the gratification of seeing the clouds descend upon the roof of my house—at least thus saith the ancient harpy from whom I engaged my “locale”—but I must confess that I am at a loss to understand the nature of the particular felicity to be derived from this source: have I not been living in the clouds long enough? This morning, at five o’clock, I opened my windows to make acquaintance again with the morning air as of old—my rooms were instantly filled with the sweet perfumes from the flowering trees and bright parterres blooming before me in a modest but tasteful little garden. The blossom-laden branches of a beautiful cherry-tree are actually entering the window, now that it is thrown back, and the heart-invigorating breeze now and then mischievously strews my table and writing materials, and the carpet all around me, with their white and odorous leaves. Towards the west the remarkable mountain of the Beschta, with its five singular peaks, is looming in the distance, appearing in its vague and chaotic formation like the changing, blast-driven cloud of a dispersing storm. In the north rises the Mashouk, shaped like the tall woollen kalpac of a Persian—hiding, indeed, almost the entire horizon in that part. The scene, however, towards the east is more pleasing and cheerful: before and below me lie the lively, new, and clean little town of Pjatigorod, with its health-restoring

springs of mineral waters, and its motley assemblage of visitors and cheating townspeople; and still farther from me a noble amphitheatre of mountains extends around; and at the limit of the far horizon we catch a glimpse of the silver chain of snowy and glittering pinnacles, commencing with the Kasbeck, and terminating with the mighty crests of the double-headed Yelboruss, appearing as if its summit had been divided by the same fabulous weapon that clove the all-famous "brèche de Roland."

It must be pleasant, with the mind at ease, to live in such a country. The air is pure, aromatic, and refreshing, like the kiss of a lovely child; the sun shines brightly, the sky is intensely blue—what more could I wish for?

Let us see. Pjatigorod is a watering-place, and possesses all the characteristics of European watering-places—cheating inhabitants and tol-lol visitors. In the meanwhile it is time I should visit the waters—they may at any rate corporeally benefit me; if not, I am but one fool more among the many. *N'importe*, I will now go forth and visit the Elisabeth* Spring; they tell me that it is the one most frequented by the *haut volée*, and that they congregate thither every morning to taste its chalybeate panacea.

Descending the precipitous path into the town, I proceeded along a pleasant road bordered with trees on each side, where I met with a few melancholy-looking groups of invalids, slowly moving in the direction of the mountain. The major portion of the company then assembled consisted evidently of the families of the large steppe-owners of the neighbourhood. This could have been at once pronounced at a glance, from the shabby and long-exploded fashion of the coats of the men, and the utter absence of taste in style and colour that prevailed in the costume of their womankind—mothers, sisters, and daughters. I was honoured

* The principal mineral spring of the Spa of Pjatigorod.

by them all with glances of undisguised and somewhat sympathising curiosity: the Petersburgian cut of my military coat, that was then fresh like myself from our Petro-politan city of the Czars, no doubt at first attracted their urbane attention; but as soon as they had discovered by the dimension and fashion of my epaulettes, that I was or chose to be but a simple officer, serving in the army of the Caucasus, they turned their eyes contemptuously from me, with a spurious attempt at patrician hauteur, that was to me absurd, amusing, and exhilarating in the highest degree.

The gentle ladies, however, of these provincial celebrities, who are, or who (which is all the same thing) believe they are, the queens of the waters—the Undines of the chalybeate—were rather more merciful to the poor stranger: they used their eye-glasses with an air of languid patronage, and distinguished my uniform with the favour of a particular scrutiny. These ladies have no doubt learned the meaning of the phrase "*en penitence*," in a military sense, and they perhaps conceive it possible here in the Caucasus to meet with a high-born heart, fiery as noble, beating beneath the imperial button, and with a refined and cultivated mind under a white foraging cap.* These dames are many of them apparently very amiable, and some of them very lovely. Every season their former admirers must abandon the ranks of their legions of martyrs for others who have been sometime awaiting their promotion, or who claim it boldly at once in virtue of their powers of pleasing, of their rank, or their wealth.

In ascending the narrow and winding footpath leading to the wholesome sources of the spring, I overtook a crowd of civil and

* A Russian officer, while in active service, is not allowed, upon any possible occasion, to lay aside his uniform; disgrace and dismissal from the service would be the immediate consequence of an infringement of this most stringent regulation.

military persons, who, as I learned later, constitute a peculiar class of themselves among those who court the salubrious effects of the chalybeate spa. They drink—but it is not the waters—unless it be “strong waters;” they walk a great deal, but it is only in lounging about without an object; they gamble fearfully, and complain of *ennui*, like their betters, whom they cannot approach, and by whom they are utterly unnoticed: they are what is in England so happily termed “gents.” They fill their ornamented glasses with a peculiar flourish of their own with the mineral treasures of the springs, and assume studied positions of resigned suffering. The civilians, I perceive, indulge in sky-blue cravats, with the ends standing out at right angles, like the wings of a sylphide of the *corps de ballet*, and the military men exhibit white collars lapping over their demi-civilised black stocks. They affect a deep contempt for provincial society—not even excepting the ladies—and sigh after the brilliant salons of the metropolitan aristocracy, where they never would, should, or could have been possibly admitted.

Well! here I am at last at the spring. Near the square stands a little pavilion with a red roof, from which branches a long gallery, where the visitors promenade when the weather is unpropitious. Several suffering officers, some of whom seemed seriously wounded, were leaning on their crutches and walking-sticks, or were sitting on the gallery, pale, listless, and dull. Many ladies, also, were walking rapidly up and down the square, as if impatiently awaiting the beneficial effects of the mineral waters they had imbibed. Among them were two or three rather pretty faces. Under the vine-clad, trellised alleys, hiding the rugged side of the Mashouk, I could perceive the tasteful French bonnet of a lady obviously an admirer of solitude *à deux*. It was, by the way, one of those peculiar bonnets that I have always looked upon with suspicion, because bonnets, like hats, have their particular charac-

ters; and for the reason also, that I have invariably discovered, upon a closer inspection, either a military cap or one of those shapeless round hats in their immediate proximity. From another and smaller pavilion, called the Harp of Æolus, upon an elevated rock, the admirers of nature were wandering about. Among this latter-named class of visitors were two learned Thebans, the travelling tutors of several young cubs of the aristocracy, just emancipated from the ferule of the college podagogues.

I had paused, wearied with my examination of the place and the people it contained, and was leaning against the corner of the pavilion, lost in admiration of the picturesque beauties of the scene, when I suddenly heard a familiar voice behind me, addressing me thus:—

“Zadonskoi! Why, how long have you been here?”

I turned round towards the speaker—it was Frantovskoi! We embraced one another, or rather he embraced me. I had met him and made his acquaintance whilst in active service, and doing duty in the same brigade. He was wounded like Achilles, but with a ball in the foot, and had left his regiment, it seems, on sick leave, for the mineral waters, about a week after me.

Frantovskoi is a junior officer of cavalry, and only a year in the service. He wears his private dragoon cloak* with a peculiarly melodramatic style—something between a Roman *toga* and the *cassa* of a brigand of Catalonia; he is also decorated with a cross of St. George. He is a well-made fellow, of somewhat dark complexion and black hair. His age would seem to be twenty-five years, although he can scarcely have attained twenty-three.

* In the lower grades of the Russian service the officers, who in England rank as cornets and ensigns, are not entitled to wear epaulettes; they are merely distinguished by the lace upon the facings; and they are compelled to wear the common soldier's cloak, as regards shape and colour, though the quality of the material is left to their own choice.

When he speaks he has the habit of throwing his head back with a certain air, as of a man conscious of having a striking countenance. He is incessantly tormenting his mustaches with his left hand, while his right rests with studied negligence upon his crutch. His address is curt and rather sudden. He is one of those people who always have a ready store of original and showy phrases ready for use, but who are deaf to wit and cold to the beautiful. To produce an impression is their highest ambition and gratification; and they are especially admired by girls of weak and romantic temperaments, such as are often found in provincial circles. When such men grow old they become either respectable and most matter-of-fact farmers or arrant and irrecoverable drunkards—sometimes both. Frantovskoi's ruling passion is declamation; he has a marvellous memory, and could stone you to death with quotations, but as soon as the conversation exceeded the limits of general information he was dumb.

In fact, the all-engrossing object of his most earnest admiration is "himself." His main object evidently is to become the hero of a romance; he has, indeed, so long endeavoured to convince the public at large that he was not born for the vulgarities of this every-day world, and that he is the victim of destiny and of mysterious influences; that he has himself at last begun to believe it devoutly. His advent in the Caucasus, he would have us believe, is also connected with some romantic incident; such men contrive to spin a sentiment from an artichoke, and would even extract a romance from a worsted stocking. I can imagine, that previous to his departure from the paternal hearth he suggested to some half-dozen of his fair neighbours, in the tone of Zampa, and in a faltering voice, that he did not leave for the simple purpose of joining the army, but that—"Ah! no!—believe it not—I go not forth to win a warrior's fame. In life my only hope now is to find a soldier's grave—and there are causes"—

then, do doubt, while covering his eyes with one of his hands, he may have continued thus: "not you (or *thou*, as the case may be)—"thou couldst not guess the yearnings of this wayward soul! Thy pure heart would tremble at the revelation! And yet why? What am I to thee?"—and then, with a mighty sigh, as if his heart was bursting, he has turned away—leaving the fair but matter-of-fact provincial to wonder whether he is tipsy or suffering from indigestion.

He told me himself, by the bye—though the confidence was somewhat vague, that the reason which had decided him on devoting himself to the army was "a secret between himself and heaven."

It was for this reason, no doubt, that he wore his common soldier's cloak with such theatrical display. He is truly a most amusing character, and I have learned to understand and appreciate him thoroughly; and for that reason, though he is an amusing, harmless "*bon diable*" enough, I more than suspect that he does not particularly like me, although we are on rather intimate terms. Frantovskoi, with all his assumption, is, however, truly a spirited and daring fellow, for I have seen him before now in action and under fire—to be sure he attitudinizes and shouts as if on the stage, but at the same time he slashes about him with his *shashka* in right good earnest; and in a charge, I have seen him throw himself in the midst of the enemy gallantly enough, though perhaps with his eyes shut.

I shall take M. Frantovskoi medicinally, as he is here; and yet, notwithstanding all that I know in his favour, I cannot conceal from myself that I have at intervals a certain antipathy towards him. I am afraid we shall somehow offend each other—that we shall strike against each other—and one of us will—must suffer. I am confident of myself: I am of adamant—this thing is plaster.

We met as old acquaintances would meet: I began to question him about life and social arrangement at the mineral waters, and to inquire who were the principal visitors at the time.

"We live a rather prosaic life here," answered Frantovskoi, with a sigh: "in the morning we drink the waters and lounge about the place like all other invalids; and in the evening we take wine, and suffer *ennui* like all other healthy people. There is a bevy of women here, but they offer but few consolations for the general monotony—they play at Whist, Boston, and Preference, as if cards were the sole end of existence; they dress without taste, and speak villanous French without grammar. From Moscow there is but one family here since the season commenced—it is that of the Princess Ohotnikoff with her fair daughter; but I have not yet made their acquaintance. The common dragoon-cloak of the poor subaltern will render him invisible, I fear, to all people of their rank. The sympathy which it elicits from the women is in itself sufficiently unpleasant."

I agreed with him cordially. Pity and contempt are certainly nearer allied than is usually imagined.

Our conversation here ceased, for at this moment two ladies passed us proceeding towards the springs: the one appeared somewhat elderly, but the other seemed to possess the lightness and elasticity of youth. I could not see their faces on account of their bonnets, but I could perceive that they were dressed with great simplicity, but with the most exquisite taste. The light but aristocratic carriage of the younger lady had something still childish in its graceful contour that defied definition, but particularly fascinating to the observer; while they were passing us, she spread around her one of those indescribable and vague mixtures of perfumes, such as the long-cherished and treasured letters of a beloved object are usually scented with.

"These are the ladies I was speaking to you about," said Frantovskoi; "they are the Princess Ohotnikoff and her daughter, the lovely Princess Anastasia: what do you think of her?" added he. "They arrived only within the last three days."

"However, you know her name already, that's something," said I.

"Yes, I heard it accidentally yesterday morning," replied he with a blush. "I must confess, however, that I don't care particularly to make their acquaintance. These proud people of the court circles look upon us poor soldiers as upon semi-savages. And, besides, have they the time and the inclination to descend from the stilted pride of their lofty position to appreciate a manly heart beating under a coarse dragoon cloak?"

"Poor cloak!" said I to my egotist, and not without smiling. "But who is that gentleman who just accosted them? See he is with them still; and observe how civilly he is presenting them with their glasses preparatory to their morning dose?"

"Oh! that fellow? he is from Moscow I believe: he is a gambler, too; one may guess that at once by his heavy gold chain dangling backwards and forwards on that intensely blue waistcoat—and pray remark the enormous walking-stick—one could imagine it an heirloom from Robinson Crusoe: but he is at least consistent, for you see his beard and hair are in proportion, *à la mowick*."

"You are a very misanthrope, Frantovskoi," said I; "you are positively prejudiced against the whole human race."

"And have I not my reasons, Zadonskoi?" demanded my friend, with his good-natured features suddenly screwed into the sneer of Catiline, or of the conspirator of a melodrama.

"Bah!"

The two ladies had by this time left the springs and were coming towards us. Frantovskoi succeeded in suddenly assuming a theatrical attitude, which, with the assistance of the crutches, was very effective, and he continued the conversation—but this time, as if by accident, in French.

"Mon cher, je hais les hommes pour ne pas les mépriser, car autrement la vie serait une farce trop dégoûtante." *

* This admixture of French, and occasionally of German, must not be considered as vulgar and in bad taste in a work portraying Russian manners and society. It must be recollected that it is only very lately that his Imperial Majesty has issued a very proper and natural order that all Russians shall *understand* and speak the Russian language. The Emperor has even insisted that it shall be spoken at court, where French was previously the only language spoken, and it has but recently been abandoned. It was by no means unusual to find among the *haut ton*, and particularly the ladies, individuals who knew as much of the language of their native land as an Irish lady of fashion may be supposed to understand of the national tongue of her beautiful island. This new ordination of the Czar was, indeed, a wise one; and, as may be imagined, it has had the effect of inducing a greater feeling of nationality among the higher classes, who were before this time almost alien to the body of their countrymen; and literature in Russia, in consequence of the patronage of the higher classes, has within the last few years made the most rapid strides throughout the empire, both as regards the quantity of writers and the calibre of the works submitted to the public. It has more particularly had the effect of giving to Russian authors a style of their own, if I may be permitted the expression—a literary nationality, in lieu of the tame and almost servile imitation of the French and German style, with which they were previously justly charged.

But even now we must bear in mind that the literature of Russia is exceedingly circumscribed, though dawning as brightly and promisingly as the most ardent patriot can possibly desire. Hence the Russian education, even of the middle class (as it would be called in Western Europe), is thrown for all resource upon the French and German authors; and it would be difficult to find a Russian of that station who was not a proficient in those languages, while the acquisition of English or Italian is scarcely considered an accomplishment. The effect of all this is, that all over the empire, but especially in both the capital and in what is called the salons of the second and third order—and they are certainly numerous enough—you may hear four or five languages spoken at once, and by Russians,

The young Princess Anastasia turned her charming and intelligent face towards the speaker, and honoured him with a long and inquisitive look. The meaning of this glance was certainly somewhat ambiguous, but it was neither contemptuous nor antagonistic. I could not help inwardly complimenting my friend upon the distinction.

"Your Princess Anastasia is positively charming," said I to him. "She has marvellous eyes. I like eyes without glitter; this girl's are soft and gentle—they have a calm about them—pigeon-like, and all that sort of thing. However, I think her eyes are all that is worth looking at in her face. But her teeth now—are they white?—are they sound and straight? because teeth are of importance, particularly as regards mutton and bread and butter. It is a pity she did not smile as well as look astonished at your elaborate and mephistophilistic aphorism."

"Why, you speak of the loveliest woman I have seen for some time," answered the romantic cornet, "as an Englishman would descant on the points of a race-horse."

"*Mon cher,*" said I to him, with an attempt at imitation both of his voice and manner: "*je méprise les femmes pour ne pas les aimer, car autrement la vie serait un mélodrame trop ridicule.*"

I happened to turn my head at this moment, and encountered the astonished countenance of the young princess, who was then passing us with her mother—comment was useless, so I turned upon my heel and left him.

I wandered for about half an hour beneath the rocks, admiring the fresh and beautiful flowering shrubs that grew there. The day began to grow somewhat too warm for walking, and I thought

who even carry the habit so far that it is the commonest thing in the world to hear a phrase commenced in the Russian tongue terminated in French or German, or *vice versa*.

of retracing my steps. In passing the fountain I stopped for a short time to rest under the shady roof of the gallery, and thence I witnessed a rather amusing scene. The *dramatis personæ* of this little farce were standing in about the following order: the Princess maternal, and the Moscovite *gentilâtre* in attendance, were occupying seats under the covered gallery—and they appeared deeply engaged in a serious or interesting conversation; the Princess Anastasia, however, who had no doubt been drinking her last matutinal glass of the mineral abomination, was walking up and down alone before the spring, in a state apparently of thoughtful preoccupation, whilst Frantovskoi, in his most elaborate attitude, was standing at the basin itself; no one else was immediately near them, or indeed in the little square. I gradually approached and placed myself behind a projecting angle of the gallery, to observe the proceedings of my eccentric friend, who was now at the top of his bent. At this moment Frantovskoi dropped his glass upon the sand and made a variety of efforts suggestive of graceful agony to stoop and regain it; however, his wounded foot prevented him, or appeared to do so. Poor young fellow! how he exerted himself whilst making the most of those interesting crutches; but his attempts were vain. His face, from which he was displaying a panorama of expressions, became by this time highly flushed and slightly confused. But the Princess Anastasia had seen all this better than I.

Lighter than a fawn upon the hills she hastened forward, raised his drinking-glass from the ground and at once presented it to him with a slight but charmingly graceful movement of her figure: her lovely cheeks were suffused with a deep blush; she turned her head hastily towards the gallery, and, assured that her mother had seen nothing of her little *lèse-etiquette*, she appeared tranquillised at once. When Frantovskoi had sufficiently

recovered from his delighted surprise to express his thanks, she had already long since disappeared. Some time later she left the gallery in company of the elder princess and the attendant *gentilatre*; but in passing again before the enraptured Frantovskoi, I remarked that she assumed an air of convenance and dignity: she took especial care not to catch his eye, and so avoided the passionate glances with which he followed her every movement, until she was shrouded from his sight behind the clustering branches of the linden-trees on the Boulevards. But once more was her pretty French bonnet visible that morning as she was crossing the street, and she entered one of the most elegant houses of Pjatigorod; she was immediately followed by her mother, who at the door-way dismissed the Moscovite dangler.

It was only then that the sentimental cornet could find the use of his eyes, and so took notice of my presence.

"Did you see it?" demanded he with excitement, while violently pressing my hand: "she is an angel!"

"Is she, indeed! I am very glad to hear it. But why is she an angel?" said I, with an air of the purest simplicity.

"Did you not see it?" he reiterated, still more warmly.

"Yes; you mean the glass you dropped I suppose. Yes, I saw it: she picked it up, did she not? If one of the waiters had been near you at the time he would have done the same thing, and undoubtedly much quicker and better, in the hope of receiving a copper or so for his trouble. However, it was really very interesting and quite natural that she felt sympathy for indescribable sufferings such as yours: positively you 'mopped and mowed' like an ape with the measles, and made tremendous grimaces in stooping upon that wounded hoof of yours."

"And you remained insensible, Zadonskoi, in beholding that lovely being at a moment like that, when all her angel soul

was reflected upon her heavenly features!" continued the poetic cornet in great disgust.

"My dear boy, I was thinking what the devil one could get for dinner in this charming little town of yours," I answered.

I took a mischievous pleasure in laughing at his nascent sentiment. One of my natural propensities is certainly contradiction—my very nature is contradictory even to itself; my whole life has been but one continued chain of sad and fatal contradictions of the heart and of the mind. The presence and the emotion of an enthusiast, renders me matter-of-fact and cynically cold; and I verily believe that frequent intercourse with a phlegmatic and rule of three person would make me a distinguished epic poet. I must also confess that an unpleasant but very familiar feeling passed at that moment through my heart; this feeling was simply envy. I was secretly angry that this princess of whom I knew nothing, to whom I had never spoken, and whom I might never see again, had not smiled upon me instead of on my companion.

Frantovskoi and I proceeded slowly and silently down the hill, and arriving upon the Boulevard we passed the domicile of the lovely princess, who happened to be seated with a guitar in her hands near the open window, my halting friend here pressed my arm violently to signalise his discovery, and immediately cast upon her one of his most studied glances.

I simply raised my glass—slowly and deliberately but not impertinently, and looked at her with a face as expressionless and void of interest or admiration, as if I was examining a fine tree, or the portrait of my grandmother, newly renovated, and returned from the cleaner. I perceived that she half smiled upon Frantovskoi, and appeared annoyed at my scrutiny, and by the bye; how *could* a poor devil of an officer *en penitence* in the

Caucasus—they knew me then but as such—presume to fix his glass upon a real princess from Moscoow, and not even admiringly? “And yet, friend Frantovskoi, should I feel inclined to enter the lists with you in the future, you little dream that this trifling act of mine has already thrown you immeasurably in the back ground.”

June 10.—This morning I had the pleasure of a visit from an old friend who is established here: *Doctor Wild* is a Russian and a physician; but his name is English, and I have long dubbed him doctor, as that is I believe the classic handle that these modern Carthaginians attach to the names of their mediciners. Doctor Wild—and yet he is a thorough Russ.

We had a long and animated conversation on a multitude of subjects, and certainly this Wild is a remarkable man in many points.

He is a sceptic and materialist, like the generality of medical men whom I have met with; but he is nevertheless at the same time a poet, and a poet in the fullest sense of the word, though he never perhaps inflicted a thundering epic on his friends, or even pelted them to death with sonnets and madrigals; but he possesses a keen appreciation of the beautiful, and he seems familiar with the innermost recesses of the human heart, and yet he does not appear to know how to turn his knowledge to advantage. He is a man of undoubted genius, and being poor, the vulgar fools of fashion's copper currency can afford to evince the envy, fear, or dislike which all things feel instinctively towards a master mind. He has many enemies. I have even heard it said that he enjoys the sufferings of his patients, and yet I have seen him myself weep at the bed of a dying moodjick. His character is a singular and eccentric one, he is poor and he dreams of millions, but merely to further his schemes, for he is a

projector on a colossal scale; but for pecuniary considerations he would not venture a step out of his chosen path. He told me this morning that he would rather do a service to his bitterest enemy than oblige a friend, because, said he, it would be selling benevolence, as it were, and the esteem of an enemy might possibly increase in proportion to his adversary's generosity. He had the reputation of being savagely sarcastic, and truly I have seen many an impertinent fool wince and quiver under the keen and merciless edge of his repartees. His antagonists, and especially those of the medical profession, had spread the malevolent report that he ridiculed his patients in his private circle—it was even averred that he caricatured them; the withering sarcasms in which he so constantly indulged abetted the slander, which he was too proud or too indolent to contradict, so that these calumnies gained ground, and many of the visitors of Pjatigorod even had, it seems, dispensed with his services. Those of his friends, however, who were serving in the Caucasus, and who knew how to appreciate his merits, professional and otherwise, were uselessly striving to re-establish his reputation and his practice.

The doctor was hardly of middle stature, thin, and feeble as an infant; one of his feet was smaller than its fellow, and partially deformed, reminding one of Lord Byron—*à propos*:—his head seemed enormous in proportion to his spare figure; and his hair was cut "*à la malcontent*"—thus the irregular shape of his skull was mercilessly exposed; his small, unsettled black eyes appeared as if they were always endeavouring to penetrate your thoughts. He dressed like a gentleman, with good taste and great care; his small, bony hands were generally encased in light-yellow kid-gloves. His coat, cravat, and waistcoat were professionally black. We soon learned to understand and appreciate one another perfectly, and we became friends.

I originally met with the doctor in the midst of a noisy and numerous company; the conversation had been running upon various subjects, but towards the morning a discussion on the nature of innate conviction came on the *tapis*, and every one was convinced of something or other, which he held up and maintained as self-evident fact.

"As for me," said the doctor, "I am convinced of only one thing."

"Of what, sir, pray?" demanded I, anxious to ascertain the opinion of a man who had throughout all the evening been a silent listener.

"Simply of this," replied he, with his inimitable dryness of manner; "that sooner or later, on a very fine morning, I shall be happy enough to die."

"I am more fortunate than you, then," said I, "for I can boast of two convictions more than you; namely, I am convinced that I was unhappy enough to have been born on an extremely disagreeable evening; besides which, I have not the slightest doubt that we are both talking nonsense."

It was some sharp *bizarrierie* like this that first led me to observe the man that evening, for there was a manner of saying what he did that was indescribably original. Since that moment we began to notice one another in the crowd. We met frequently, and conversed upon things the most abstract to the veriest bagatelles, until we at last discovered each other's mental calibre, and that we were spending our time in mutual deception. At last we began to look each other significantly in the face, as the Roman gladiators were wont to do, according to Cicero; we began to smile, as though we considered one another remarkably astute individuals, and parted: the explanation was for a long time impending, but at last it took place, and to our mutual satisfaction.

I was lying stretched upon the couch in my quarters, with my eyes fixed upon vacancy and on the ceiling, and my head resting upon one of my hands and a cigarette in the other, when "Doctor Wild" entered my room. He seated himself deliberately in a *fauteuil*, put his hat carefully on the table and his cane in a corner, yawned ominously once or twice, and then informed me that the day was very hot. I replied that I was entirely of his opinion, and, moreover, that I was annoyed by the flies; and thereupon we both remained silent for some time.

"But you will no doubt agree with me, my dear doctor," said I, "that without fools the world would be very dull. Pray observe now, for instance—here we are, two decent fellows, certainly above intellectual mediocrity both of us, and I very much suspect of the same turn of mind, and thinking very similarly upon most subjects; and we have long been perfectly aware that we could converse *ad infinitum* upon every possible topic, and yet we have both been afraid of taking the initiative, each fearing that the other would be shocked by the opinions of his neighbour, and yet we know that our feelings are similar by a kind of intuition; we have for a long time been familiar with the most intimate thoughts of each other, and it arises from this, that our curiosity regarding each other has been mutual; and with minds constituted like ours, concessions are unnecessary; a word, a glance, is sufficient; a significant sigh or a smile is a whole history with us; we can trace the arteries of each other's most secret feelings through their triple hide of egotism and conventionality. The melancholy of the greater portion of the dancing-dogs of society, called men, makes us smile, and the insane cheerfulness of the same animals renders us sad; we hate one-half of the world, and despise the rest; and we are too indolent or too honest to hide our sentiments, so we are both in return most cordially disliked; notwithstanding which, we con-

trive to rub on pretty philosophically, and indeed we are, generally speaking, tolerably accustomed to all, except to ourselves, and thus an exchange of ideas and feelings might be beneficial, if we can establish the true *entente* between us: we already know all that we can possibly wish as regards each other, and even more, perhaps, than at all interests us; so let us commence our acquaintance again on the basis of that freemasonry of opinion that exists between us. *Allons, mon cher docteur*; let us start at haphazard for a subject, only let it be something novel. Come, I will open the first parallel by a leading question: Tell me what is the news?"

Tired of my somewhat long speech, I closed my eyes, and had recourse to my cigarette. After some moments of reflection, the doctor replied, with his peculiar, calm, and meaning smile:—

"There is some glimmer of sense in your *galimatias*."

"There are two," replied I.

"Tell me the first," he rejoined gaily, "and I will guess the other."

"Well, then, commence," said I, fixing my eyes on the ceiling, while smiling inwardly at the originality of the arrangement.

"You wish to obtain information from me as regards some of the company who have lately arrived at the mineral waters, and I have already guessed, moreover, the particular individual who causes your present pre-occupation, for inquiries about you have already been set on foot."

"Doctor! doctor! it is absolutely unnecessary for us to speak, for it seems we can read the heart of each other by a kind of electric duality."

"Now for the other; it is your turn," continued the man of medicine, good-humouredly.

"Well," said I, frankly, "I wished you to take the initiative

for several reasons. Firstly, because listening is far less fatiguing; secondly, silence is the safest way of not committing oneself; thirdly, by hearing everything and saying nothing, one might obtain unexpected and unsought-for information that might be very welcome; and fourthly, because men of talent, like yourself, generally prefer auditors to speakers. But, now, let us come to the point at once. What did this same old Princess Ohotnikoff say to that celebrated physician, Doctor Wild, about that eccentric fellow, Zadonskoi?"

"Are you so sure that it was the mother, and not the daughter?"

"Perfectly convinced."

"How so?"

"Because the younger princess spoke to you about Frantovskoi."

"You are certainly gifted with a very respectable amount of penetration," answered the physician. "The young princess observed to me, that she was of opinion that this young fellow, who wears his grey cloak like the toga of the conscript fathers, has been reduced to his present grade for some unfortunate duel or imprudent love affair."

"Ah! just so," said I; "and I trust that you have left her in this sentimental deception."

"Certainly."

"Excellent! We have a plot, sir!" exclaimed I, with satisfaction; "we must now work the puppets of our comedy, and find a *finale* to it. It appears to me as if destiny for once determines to take the trouble of especially guarding me from *ennui*."

"Which, reduced to common sense, means, that you will make this shallow young friend of yours in some way or other your victim," added the doctor with his usual smile.

"My dear doctor, you are positively delightful; but pray continue."

"Well, the princess' mother told me that she had seen you before, that your face was familiar to her. I suggested it was most probable that she had seen you in St. Petersburg, and had met you in society. I told her your name. It seems she recollected it perfectly; and from her manner I should infer that your career lately must have caused some little sensation; for the princess began to enumerate some of your most remarkable freaks and extravagances; and in her opinion your conduct merits almost all the calumnies that have been heaped upon you by the world.

"Better and better," I ejaculated: "allow me to shake hands with you, doctor. This is beyond my most sanguine wishes; but pray proceed."

"Her daughter," continued my informant, "was listening with much curiosity; and in her sage opinion you are now the hero of some equivocal romance of a new style. I did not contradict the old lady as it was not necessary to tell her that she was talking nonsense, and that you were a charlatan."

"Excellent matron!" I exclaimed. "You are my best friend," and I again shook the worthy physician by his hand, who returned the pressure with equal warmth, and continued thus:—

"If you like, I will introduce you; I can then abuse you behind your back with the greatest comfort, and to your heart's content."

"God forbid!" said I, "not for the universe—that would ruin all; besides, it is not the fashion to introduce heroes, particularly of equivocal romances. They only make the acquaintance of the females of their species their heroines by saving them from imminent peril or impending death."

"And you are really determined then to have some fun with this young princess? which means," added the doctor with his

usual delicious calm, "that you will, if you can, cause her all the wretchedness in your power through her own bitter feelings!"

"Ah! are you there, most mephistophilistic mediciner! However, I don't think I have any intentions of any kind at present; and if I had, it is hardly probable I should tell you. I never make a confession of my secrets by any chance, but I am delighted when they are guessed, because it leaves me an opportunity of denying them if convenient. However, you must give me a description of the mother and daughter. Just tell me what you know of them."

"Well, then, first for mamma—her age and position give her the privilege. She is a lady about forty-five years of age," replied Wild; "she has been a fine woman in her time, and for so long that she finds the habit difficult to get over. She is supposed to possess all the social virtues and an excellent digestion, but her pulsation is spoiled. She thinks rather seriously upon religious subjects, and her face is covered with an erubescence, which accounts for her advent at the waters here. The latter portion of her irreproachable life she has spent in Moscow, where she has acquired a respectable corpulence in her retirement. She is very fond of equivocal anecdotes, told smartly and discreetly, like most ladies of a certain age, and indeed she can tell a few of them herself, but not in the presence of her daughter. By the bye, she assured me only yesterday that the fair Anastasia is as innocent as a dove—of course she is; I never yet knew of a young lady that was not. I don't indeed suppose there are any born who are not so. I assured the maternal princess that I really could not help it; and I begged her to be quite easy in her mind, as nothing should induce me to divulge her secret. The ancient lady suffers martyrdom from rheumatism; and her daughter, God knows from what, unless it be a plethora of innocence. I ordered both the ladies all that was necessary; and in addition to drink

daily two glasses of the mineral water each, and to take a couple of warm baths during the week. But I particularly enjoined good living—the best wine—and plenty of it for the maternal princess, and plenty of liberty and freedom from all contradiction to the younger one; so I am convinced they think me particularly clever in my profession. The young lady, however, appears to have very much her own way; and the mother, while admitting this, accounts for it by the eccentricity and decided character of her daughter, who, she tells me, is fabulously accomplished. Besides every other language (except perhaps Chinese), she has lately read Shakspeare and Walter Scott in English, and has a knowledge of algebra. She has written an epic poem, but I am not quite certain whether she plays the ophiclede! Well, fashion is everything, and it seems that the last coquetry of the ladies of Moscow is to appear, not blue-stockings, but absolutely abstruse; and why not? one affectation is as good as another, but it may have this disadvantage, that soon none but an encyclopedist can ever hope to be *un homme à succès*. However, the princess' mother is on the whole a good-natured woman, and she is very fond of the society of young men, whilst the severe princess, her daughter, looks upon them with an air of suspicion, if not antagonism—a new Moscow fashion again! Oh! land of artificiality! but these Muscovite *belles* have little to boast of now in the shape of a *tendre* but lively Lovelace of forty-five or fifty, who gallants his lady about in an invalid chair, and declares the burning impulses of his fiery heart from between a pair of crutches. But then to be sure these sort of sexagenarians have generally saved money; besides, they make convenient pack-horses to bear their wives' follies, debts, and etceteras."

"Have you been in Moscow, doctor?" said I.

"Yes, I have been there; I practised there indeed for some time."

"Proceed."

"Indeed, I think, I have told you all I know. But stop! there is something I had nearly forgotten. The young lady, nevertheless, like many others I have met with, is fond of idealising upon passions and sentiments, which in all probability she is not capable of feeling, or perhaps ever of appreciating. She passed the winter, too, in St. Petersburg; but she was disappointed—the angel did not amuse herself, and I observe that she is especially bitter against the society of the metropolis; which, as you may guess, knowing they are from Moscow—may be translated into the fact, that their reception in the court circles was something of the coolest."

"Exactly," answered I; "the old insolent exclusiveness of the home-circles all over—it could not be better. But tell me, doctor, what have they been doing to-day? I suppose they had but few visitors."

"On the contrary," answered the doctor, "they had several; there was a showy aide-de-camp with a feather, nevertheless, heavier than his brains—a fierce guardsman with mustaches as large as his debts, and a young lady who has recently arrived here—she is a relation of the princess by her late husband; she is rather pretty, but appears to be delicate. Did you not see her at the spring? She is of a middle stature and very fair, with regular features, but her face betrays the latent presence of consumption; and on her cheek I remarked a charming mole, though of a peculiar shape. I was agreeably surprised by her whole appearance, so different from the generality of the soulless automata into which the women of her class think fit to transform themselves."

"A mole did you say?" half murmured I between my teeth, "and on her left cheek?"

The doctor looked at me for a moment in silence, and then,

with his peculiar smile, he added: "I did not say on *which* cheek I observed the mole. You certainly have a happy faculty of guessing." Then suddenly leaning over towards me, and laying his hand upon my heart, he added with conviction: "You know her!"

My heart was beating, I must confess, and with an unusual pulsation.

"It is my turn, doctor, to compliment you on your penetration," said I. "I rely upon your good offices, and I am certain that you will not betray me. I have not seen her yet, but your description, if not my own heart, tells me she is a woman I have seen in years gone by. Do not speak to her about me: if she should question you in any way, either know nothing of me, or I pray you to calumniate me."

"I will, since you wish it!" said the delightful doctor, shrugging his shoulders—adding, with his usual cynicism: "I will simply *describe* you."

When my original acquaintance had left me, an incomprehensible sadness seemed to lay at my heart with an oppressive weight. Has fate brought us again together then, and here in the distant Caucasus? or is it possible that she can have come here intentionally, knowing that she would meet me at the waters? Heaven forbid that it should be so! How shall we meet? Still it may not be her! But unhappily my presentiments never deceive me."

Later in the day, at about six o'clock, I went out to the Boulevards, where I found a crowd, composed of the inhabitants of the town and of the visitors. The princesses, mother and daughter, were sitting beneath the linden-trees, and surrounded by a bovy of elegant young men, each striving to surpass the other in flattery and *petits soins*. I took a seat at a certain distance from them, and entered into conversation with two officers of the garrison with regard to the fortress, its strength, &c., and quota of men.

I do not recollect what I said, for I was thinking of anything else, but it must have been something supremely ridiculous, for they laughed most heartily. Their laughter was so loud that curiosity attracted a few men from the princess' immediate neighbourhood; but later one by one of their numerous satellites deserted them, and joined the little circle I had formed so unexpectedly. I did not shrink in the least from the arrangement, though I found myself in the centre of a ring of inquisitive strangers. The sense of my anecdotes, I am afraid, would not have stood the test of repetition; but I repeated them in a manner that evidently amused. I made all sorts of mischievous remarks, while, of course, avoiding personality upon the originals who were continually passing us, and with an acerbity of sarcasm that has made me so many enemies in life. I continued to amuse the public thus, and gratis too, till the setting in of the evening. The princess, with her daughter, had passed me several times in the course of their promenade, accompanied by an elderly gentleman. The younger lady cast several "violently" vacant looks upon me, if I may use so paradoxical a phrase, which were unquestionably intended to express an indifference, bordering upon contempt, but which to one who, like me, unhappily can read the human heart like a handbill, spoke of nothing but vexation and coquetry.

"What is he speaking about?" inquired she, as I afterwards heard of one of the men who had returned to their circle, out of a sense of propriety. "Undoubtedly, some very interesting romance about his prowess and campaigns?"

She had spoken thus in an aristocratic drawl, and sufficiently loud for me to hear her, and no doubt every one else, with the amiable intention of making me lose my *aplomb*. Poor child! she little dreamed she was playing with fire.

"Excellent," thought I. "Alas! you are displeased with me, and almost in earnest. I have not even appeared to know

of your existence—you, the presiding goddess here—and I have now scattered your circle of devotees. Capital! nothing can be better! But patience, lovely princess! patience! you may see more of me!"

Frantovskoi was hovering around her like a sentimental vulture, hardly ever taking his eyes for an instant from her. I am ready to lay a wager that to-morrow he will contrive to get somebody to introduce him to the princess. She will no doubt be glad of it, for she evidently suffers from *ennui*.

June 16.—In the course of these last two days my little affairs here have progressed marvellously. I could not possibly have succeeded better in the time; and I am actually informed that the young princess detests the very sight of me. My kind acquaintances have already retailed to me several epigrams on my account from the pen of my fair enemy, needlessly bitter, and consequently to me most flattering. She is, it appears, much surprised that I am habituated to good society, and moreover, as she has discovered, familiar with the salons of some of her relatives, and intimate with several of her cousins at St. Petersburg.

We meet every day as usual. I am using my strategy to become acquainted with all her legion of martyrs, from the smart aide-de-camp of the commandant here, to the pale Muscovite, who, I suspect, has followed her to the waters. I have every reason to be pleased with my success, and I fancy I have secured the entire corps, rank and file. I generally hate visitors and company of all denominations, but now my quarters are full of them. They are the most affectionate set of fellows in existence: they breakfast with me, dine with me, sup with me, and win my money, or else they borrow it; and oh! *les beaux yeux de ma cassette*, as honest Molière says, how fond they are of me, to be sure. As for the aide-de-camp, when he is ashamed of borrowing

from me for the fifteenth time, he gets drunk on my champagne, to give him the necessary courage.

Yesterday I met her at a shop in the upper town; she was inquiring the price of a very beautiful Persian carpet, which she seemed most anxious to secure. She tried to persuade mamma to waive economy with the most winning entreaties: it would be, she said, such an elegant addition to her *boudoir*! The elder princess was clearly yielding to the coaxing of her spoilt daughter, and had even commenced a kind of outpost skirmish with the vendor as to the cost, when—though my heart smote me at the time; but I had an object in view—I gave a trifle more than she offered, and the carpet was mine. For this act of temerity I was supposed to be shattered to my innermost being, by one of the most savage looks that could possibly be conceived to emanate from so charming a countenance. Towards the dinner hour I gave an express order to my groom to lead my Tscherkessian horse for exercise, covered with my new acquisition, up and down the Boulevards; she was sure to recognise both the animal and the coveted carpet. My eccentric friend Wild was with them at the time, and informed me later that the effect was perfectly dramatic. The young princess, it seems, is determined now to declare open war. I have even observed that all men of their circle—though I am still their beloved Amphytrion—bow to me with a certain reserve when they are in her company; even my little aide-de-camp, who now gets drunk on my champagne at breakfast, to give him the assurance to look as askance at me as the rest in the afternoon. Frantovskoi, too, he is gloomy and grand, and more like a conspiring patriot than ever; he has assumed a mysterious air; he walks about with his hands behind him, like Wilhelm Tell brooding on the wrongs of the Switzers, and takes no notice of any one. His wound is healed; he scarcely now limps at all. He has, according to my

anticipations, found the opportunity of an introduction to the princess' mother, and he has at last the chance of paying his devoted homage to her fair daughter. His head will certainly be turned with the honour, and we shall have our egotistical amoroso bursting, like the frog in the fable, while striving to swell himself from under his cornet's cloak to the important dimensions of a field-marshal.

"Will you not be presented to the Princess Ohotnikoff?" was his question yesterday, put with an amusing condescension.

"Most decidedly not."

"Pray why, Zadonskoi?" he continued: "the pleasantest circle and the best society of the place!"

"My good friend, Frantovskoi, I am tired of society even elsewhere. Do you frequent the house?" I inquired, well knowing that he did not do so.

"No, not exactly, not yet. I am on very good terms with the princess, but I have been so very busy; besides, it is a somewhat awkward affair to introduce oneself, though it is, I understand, the custom here. It would be a different thing, perhaps, if I had my grade, and wore epaulets."

"Bah! Frantovskoi, a lady-killer of your calibre is by far more interesting in the coarse cloak. Believe me, you do not know, I fear, how to turn your position to advantage; say, shall I advise you? In the eyes of a sensitive and romantic young lady—a kindred soul, you know—the graceful draperies of that military toga of yours make you appear like a suffering hero."

Frantovskoi blushed and simpered like a girl at the compliment, but with an air of self-satisfaction.

"What nonsense!" said he.

"I am confident," I continued, "between you and I, that the young princess is infernally *eprise* with you already."

He coloured up till his ears glowed again like the combs of

a turkey-cock. O Vanity! Vanity! art thou not the lever with which Archimedes would have raised the globe?

"You are always joking!" said he, trying to assume an air of offended modesty; "besides, she scarcely even knows me."

"Exactly," I said. "Women always love those they don't know, or shouldn't know."

"Impossible," he continued, with all the magnanimity of abnegation; "it is not for the poor *sous-officier* to aspire to the smiles of a daughter of the *haute volée*; besides, there are reminiscences that must first—but no matter, let us change the subject; it would be ridiculous in me to think of such a thing. With you it is quite different now, Zadonskoi—rich and noble; but for me the poor soldier's cloak must shroud me for a time: yes, for a time."

Here he suddenly turned away as if to conceal some irrepressible emotion. So did I, only my emotion was laughter.

"By the bye, Zadonskoi," said he, "the young princess spoke of you yesterday."

"Indeed!" I answered; "have I really had the happiness of being spoken of by the young lady?"

"You have. However, don't rejoice, for you have little cause to feel flattered. I happened to enter into conversation with her near the fountain, quite accidentally indeed. Her third question was—'Who is that young officer with the heavy, sullen look?—he was with you a few days ago.' I asked her whom she meant, as I knew so many military men. She managed to avoid giving too elaborate a description of the time when we were seen together by her; and this again was delicate ground, for it undoubtedly brought to her mind the recollection of the distinguished kindness she did me at the spring-head when we were both there last. 'You need not name the day, princess,' said I to her; 'it will never be erased from my memory.' My

dear Zadonskoi! I have no reason to envy you, for I fear that you are irredeemably noted in the blackest books of the most lovely woman in Pjatigorod; and, indeed, I am sorry for you, because Anastasia is really charming."

I could not help observing that Frantovskoi was one of those men who, if they speak of a woman they have even only met but once or twice, immediately call her by her Christian name, or by its contraction, if the lady has had the good fortune to please them. To-morrow he will speak of the Princess Ohotnikoff as "Stacie" or "Tasia."

It was delightful; but I had my part of the farce to play out, so I assumed a serious and paternal air, and I replied thus:

"Yes, I agree with you that the young lady is rather pretty, and that I am unhappy in her dislike to me. But beware, my dear Frantovskoi: Russian ladies of her rank generally cultivate Platonic love at watering-places like this, and do not, I fear, combine those honest, primitive, and conjugal ideas with it that you and I do; whilst Platonic love, in my opinion—not that I am much versed in those things—appears to me to be really the most insidious. The young princess may, perhaps, be one of a class of young women who look to their circle of admirers for their principal amusement in life, and he who amuses her most has the largest share of her smiles—that is, for the time. I think they call such people coquettes. If the demon *ennui* intrudes upon her but only for five minutes while you are in her company, you are irretrievably lost; your talents and resources, mental and otherwise, must keep her imagination constantly on the *qui vive*; you must pique her curiosity, and you must tax her powers of conversation by your talent and originality: you must corruscato continually, like an intellectual diamond, or you will be cast aside as spurious; that is to say, not exactly—for she could not afford to lose so devoted an admirer—but you would

be her fool, her toy—the sentimental buffoon to a whimsical fine lady; she would exercise her wit and her power upon you till she made you supremely ridiculous to herself and her entire circle; for you have yet to learn, my friend, that a beautiful woman is as pitiless as a tigress to an adorer with whose devotion she cannot in the slightest degree sympathise, and that would be your position if she once ceases to respect you. She would not even have the mercy and the honesty to dismiss you; she would keep you still revolving, from sheer habit, round her orbit; and from sheer habit, too, she would still flirt with you to satiety, and be married six months later to some respectable bore of half a century, out of pure obedience to her mother, and a laudable appreciation of the ready roubles, and the position and luxuries they can command. She will then persuade herself, by way of an excitement, that she was really attached to you; and she will foster the feeling from sentimentality, and to appear in society with all the romantic interest of a secret grief, though she would not let you guess the existence of the cause of her melancholy, partly from principle, and, again, because the sentiment was not genuine; she would simply take to your idea as a gentle stimulant, more amusing and more harmless than sal-volatile, till she got older, when she would probably exchange it for religion and cherry-brandy.”

All is fair in love and war, and I could not have given my friend more fatal advice; and he would have discovered my benevolent intentions, could he have known, as I did, that to catch a woman by self-display of talent, or of anything else appertaining to the admirer, except fortune, is as absurd as to attempt to capture an ostrich with a lasso of pack-thread. No! she must be allowed to hide her head cunningly behind a tree, as those astute birds are said to do when pursued;—it is she that is to be admired—she that is to be listened to,—all power and talent of the

lover must appear to be elicited by, and reflected but from her; and if she can but be fully convinced by her *sous-pireur* that she is talented, witty, charming, beautiful, and accomplished, she will credit him in time with all those qualities himself, and she may *then* begin to admire him for them in turn. However, Frantovskoi, like all those honest fellows who take men at nearly their professed value, and who believe all women not positively hideous and under thirty to possess a pair of angelic wings delicately folded under their corsets—ready for a sudden flight to the seraphic regions of cherub and seraphim,—Frantovskoi, I repeat, was shocked at the desecration, as he called it, with which I spoke of the heavenly nature of the Princess Anastasia.

“No! no, Frantovskoi,” I continued, “*tu te berces dans une chimère sur le motif de ‘c’est l’amour, l’amour, l’amour!’*” but I am only warning you: display all your brilliant qualities before her,—continue to dazzle—and she will learn to love you, as she evidently now admires you; and wherefore not?—is it extraordinary that she should be interested in you? Love! heavenly, almighty love, knows no difference of rank, and abhors the cold stereotyped conventionalities of society. And why should she not, after all, be sensible of the devotions of one who, perhaps, may yet love her more fondly than she has ever yet been loved? because he wore the coarse soldier’s cloak of a poor sous-officier, though beneath that thick mantle a heart replete with truth and the noblest impulses of humanity beat alone for her.”

Frantovskoi was deeply moved; he struck with his fist upon the table, and began walking up and down the room.

I was laughing inwardly, indeed I could not help smiling once or twice; but fortunately he did not perceive it. Undoubtedly he was in love. Everything proved it; and I was now convinced of it, for he looked more ridiculous than ever. I even remarked a ring upon his finger: it was enamelled of blue

and gold, and no doubt bought here in town. ¶ As I had noticed it before, I took an opportunity of examining it, and I discovered to my amusement that the name of "Anastasia" was engraved upon it in small characters, and below it, the date, month, and day—and even perhaps the hour—on which she had picked up his memorable drinking cup. I hid my discovery; I did not like to provoke a confession, as I wished him to choose me voluntarily for a confidant, which would tend materially to the interest of the comedy.

* * * * *

I had risen somewhat late this morning, and on arriving at the spring I found all the visitors had left. It grew warm and close; white and grey clouds were driven swiftly over the snowy mountains, threatening the landscape with a tempest. The lofty summit of the Mashouk was smoking like a half-extinguished torch; heaps of grey clouds were hanging around its rugged acclivities, and winding round them like so many serpents. The day gradually darkened, and a strong and lucid light began to pervade the distant horizon. A storm was evidently impending. I went to seek a refuge in the grotto at the end of the vine-trellised walk. I felt sad and oppressed. I was thinking, I hardly know why, of the fair stranger with the singular mole on her cheek, of whom the eccentric doctor had spoken to me. Thus communing with myself, I had reached the grotto, and I beheld in the cool shades of its recesses the form of a lady who was sitting upon a stone-bench, with a book in her hand; but her head was inclined upon her bosom. She was not reading; her straw bonnet in this attitude hid her face. Not wishing to intrude upon her meditations I was on the point of retiring, when she lifted her head suddenly and looked fully upon me.

"Olga!" exclaimed I involuntarily.

She shuddered slightly and grew pale.

"I knew you were here," said she, in a faint voice.

I scated myself near her, and took her trembling hand in mine. A long-forgotten sensation stole through my entire being at the sweet cadence of her well-known voice. She looked me steadfastly in the face with her deep calm eyes: there was an expression of incredulity, and something even of reproach.

"It is very long since we last met," said I after a pause.

"It is a long time, Zadonskoi, and we are both changed."

"Do you no longer love me, Olga?"

"I am married!" she replied, almost inarticulately.

"Again married, Olga! I had heard something of this; years ago it was the same, and yet——"

She drew back her hand from mine, and her cheeks coloured deeply.

"Olga! do you love your second husband?"

She did not reply, and turned her head away.

"Or is he jealous of you?"

She was silent.

"What is it then? Is he young, handsome, wealthy, or powerful, and Olga no longer remembers the past?—her first love is forgotten!" I looked at her, and was alarmed: her face was full of an expression of the deepest grief, and tears were trembling in her eyes.

"Tell me," murmured she at last, "what pleasure can your wayward nature find in the torment of all that love you? I ought to hate you: from our first ill-fated meeting to our last, you have caused me nothing but misery and self-reproach."

Her voice began to falter; she strove to master her emotion, but she suddenly burst into a violent flood of tears. I tried to soothe her, and she gradually reclined her head upon my breast; at length I partially succeeded in calming her, but her head still remained in the same place.

Yes, thought I, I have caused her much unhappiness; and it is perhaps for that reason that she has loved me so unceasingly. Felicity may perhaps be forgotten, but misery—never!

I placed my arm gently round her, and we thus remained for a long while in total silence. We turned towards each other, and our eyes met. What a sea of recollections arose within me while gazing into the calm depths of those dark blue orbs! At last our heads approached, and our lips felt a long, burning, intoxicating kiss. Her hands were cold as marble; her face was flushed, and her brow like fire. Here we commenced one of those conversations which have no meaning upon paper, which cannot be repeated nor brought back to recollection; in such moments they are made up of reminiscences, of mutual avowals, of tears, regrets, and reproaches.

She, however, positively objected to my making the acquaintance of her husband, whom I find to be the very little old gentleman I have met with several times on the promenade, walking with the Princess Ohotnikoff, to whom, it seems, he is distantly related. She had married him, from some strange circumstances, *instead of his son*. He is rich, and suffers from rheumatism and a world of other ailments. I forbade myself the slightest allusion to this singular union with the patriarchal invalid from motives of delicacy, as the subject seems to pain her. She respects him, she tells me, like a father—and would betray him, I could tell *her*, like a husband. The human heart is indeed a strange and complicated piece of mechanism, but the heart of a woman is a positive marvel.

Olga's husband, Michael Bogdanovitch Borisoff, is continually with the Ohotnikoffs; he has purposely engaged a house next to theirs; Olga, also, visits them frequently. I yielded to her desire, and promised to make the acquaintance of the princess' mother, and to pay some attention to the daughter, and thus divert all

suspicion of our former knowledge of each other, while it would afford us an opportunity of meeting.

My plans may take a new direction for the advent of Olga among the *corps dramatique* of the little comedy I had proposed and commenced—may give it a somewhat more serious colour than I anticipated.

How strangely are we the creatures of circumstances! and how will all this end? I find that this little plot, which arose almost from my conversation with the physician, and in which I had hardly any object or ambition, is developing itself in spite of myself, and bids fair to end in grave results. There is a fatality that seems to attend me: I had made up my mind not to be presented to the Princess Ohotnikoff. Poor Olga, too! This interview has moved me more than I believed possible. The past rises before me as vividly as ever, and I feel again that dangerous weakness of the human heart to which I have so long been a stranger, the *besoin d'aimer*. What shall I do? Shall I leave this place and all its dangers far behind me, or remain and leave the rest to destiny? I will remain. *Soif d'aimer*? No, it cannot be that: that makes me feel uneasy and disquieted. My heart is too dead to need anything but quiet, and the enjoyment of its bitterness. Oh! but for one illusion; but one of all the thousands of my boyhood that radiated my stripling brow in a halo of happiness and hope. Gone! all gone! The veil of the world for me is rent in twain. I know the world in all its foul reality: men as they truly exist, and women as they are. How long since I have discovered that a *liaison* is the chance union of two fools for the express purpose of making each other eventually wretched, of whom one invariably turns out a knave; and have I not found that man must either be the slave of woman, or woman be the victim of man? I stand, I fear, in the latter category. It is somewhat strange that at no period of my life have

ever been the slave of a beloved object; on the contrary, I have always exercised upon their minds and will an indisputable supremacy, and without taking the least trouble to obtain it. And why is this? Is it possible, because I never give way myself to the full sway of passion, that I never can divest myself of the *arrière pensée* of a latent suspicion of the most devoted attachment—of the wildest apparent devotion—and that consequently I am ever colder and more indifferent than themselves? and for this reason, perhaps,—they are fearful of losing their hold on my regard, or we have parted: but in this I have ever had the tact to take the initiative. Does this arise naturally from the magnetical influence of a more powerful and less impulsive organisation? or, more simply still, because I had never met with a woman of a temperament sufficiently stern to cope with me? I think not; but I must confess I do not admire women of strong resolution and marked character: these qualifications are, in my opinion, neither becoming nor feminine. I have always, indeed, felt prejudiced against women of this calibre; and it is thus, no doubt, that I have been brought into conjunction with so few of them.

Olga is certainly ill; she suffers, although she will not confess to it. I am afraid that it is consumption, or the modification of that insidious blight which the French call *fièvre lente*.

The tempest still raged and we were compelled to remain for half an hour longer in the grotto. Our conversation changed from the past to the present and the future; we understood one another by a kind of freemasonry of feeling: by a tacit arrangement, neither of us spoke of our past careers since we had last met. Poor Olga! she has suffered enough through my wayward heart; the sacrifice shall now come from me. I feel that her honour is in my keeping, and this time I will not betray

the trust ; she is the only woman in the world I could not find in my heart to think or to speak of with cynicism ; besides we shall soon separate again, and it may be for ever : our roads diverge widely, and we shall both proceed upon them to our graves,—hers at any rate I fear is not far distant ; but the recollection of her devotion and worth shall remain unaltered in my heart.

At last the violence of the storm abated and we parted. I followed her with my eyes for a long time, until I lost sight of her receding form behind the shrubs and rocks. My heart was painfully oppressed : strange to say, I felt as if it had been our first *rendezvous*. O ! pleasure, bastard child of happiness !—taste of the poisoned chalice deeply as we will, the deeper the draught the more bitter the dregs it leaves behind.

I am certainly in a moralising mood to-day. I am not quite a human pack-horse, bearing the onus of guilt of a Caligula ; my faults are those of my age and station. Nor am I grown hoary in my enormities ; I am but twenty-five ; my appearance is but a little older : my face, though pale, is yet fresh ; my limbs and frame are strong and nervous ; my blood still flies a fever-heat like molten fire through my veins. But the heart ?—the heart—*there* is the leprous mark. God help me ! it is a ruined, blackened, and benighted thing ; or does it still exist ?

Returning home, I ordered my horse, mounted and rode out into the steppes. It is one of the few pleasures I really enjoy, to sit on a spirited horse and fly at speed over those wild expanses against wind and weather. I inhaled the natural perfumes of the vivifying air, whilst my eyes were fixed upon the azure horizon in the distance, striving to penetrate the cloud-pictures which were wreathing themselves around the far mountains, and which became more and more distinct before me. Whatever sorrow had oppressed my heart, or whatever rankling idea

preoccupied my mind, all was dispersed at a moment: my heart felt easier, for now the fatigues of the body conquered the troubles of the mind. There was not an earthly passion that could win a thought from me while revelling in the sight of those wild mountains—their chaotic peaks capped with eternal snows, and scintillating in all the splendours of a brilliant sun—at the sight of the blue heavens, and of the magnificent scenery through which I was careering at the hottest pace that my gallant Circassian horse could carry me.

I verily believe that the Cossacks, who were gaping on their outposts, were not a little astonished to see me flying along the steppes without an apparent object, and undoubtedly mistook me for a Tscherkess. I was told, and without flattery, that I look in the Tscherkessian costume much more like a genuine Kabardian than an officer of the guards of His Imperial Majesty of all the Russias!—whose favour, by the bye, if I should ever be happy enough to regain it, I would use to obtain a commission in the so-much-admired *Tscherkessian body guard* of Her Majesty the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, and thus have an opportunity of proving that my penitentiary period in the Caucasus has been absolutely to my advantage. And really as regards the very convenient and picturesque costume, I am a perfect *petit-maitre*—not a lace or tag of embroidery too much: valuable weapons, but with simple ornaments; my Kabardian fur cap is of the exact orthodox dimensions; the stirrups and their ornaments are fixed with the greatest nicety; my beshmet is white, and my *Tscherkessha* is dark-blue. I have attentively studied the habits of the mountaineers, and no greater compliment can possibly be paid to my vanity than the acknowledgment of my attainments in horsemanship in their peculiar style, especially on the back of a true Caucasian charger. I keep four horses: one for myself and three for my friends, because, notwith-

standing my love of solitude, I sometimes find it dull to wander about the steppes alone, like Goëthe's Erle-King. The excellent fellows often use my horses, but I very rarely have the pleasure of their company: they prefer to display themselves to the ladies at my expense on the Boulevards of Pjatigorod. It was already six o'clock in the evening, when I thought it was high time to quit my Tscherkessian saddle for a civilised dining-table: my horse was also fatigued. I therefore left the open steppes for the public road, which led from Pjatigorod to a neighbouring German settlement, which is frequently visited by the people of the spa-town, as an easy excursion on horseback. The road is tortuous and difficult, winding among rocks covered with shrubs and bushes: it is a perfect labyrinth, being divided into several side-ways, where noisy and dangerous brooks are hidden in deep grass, or concealed in steep gullies, upon which the horsemen come quite unexpectedly, and which indeed tax the skill and nerve of the bridle-hand. I had stopped to water my horse, which was somewhat distressed, when I perceived before me a gay and numerous cavalcade; the ladies in grey and blue "amazons," the men in costumes of their individual tastes; the whole company presented a lively sight, and were led on by no less distinguished persons than Frantovskoi and the Princess Anastasia.

Our tender Russian ladies who visit the watering-places of the Caucasus are, as a matter of feminine duty, in constant alarm and apprehension of attacks and incursions from the fierce Tscherkessians from the distant mountains, which they insist upon still believing probable. It is impossible to dissuade them from this opinion. In the first place it is so inviting; and then again it affords such opportunities for flirtation. And they expect, or pretend to expect, to see them lurking behind each tranquil rock, or lying in ambush in each ditch and hollow. For

this reason, no doubt, the valiant and chevaleresque Frantovskoi had girded himself with his trusty *shashka* and a brace of holster pistols. He, of course, imagined that the lives of the gentle creatures were under his especial charge, and he looked proportionably magnanimous. A small thicket hid me from their view, though I could see them plainly through its leaves, and to judge by the expression of their faces, the conversation of the princess and the knight of the cloak must have been somewhat sentimental. Frantovskoi's countenance was suggestive of all the pensive tenderness *d'un mouton qui rêve*. They were now close upon a declivity of the road, and Frantovskoi gallantly seized the reins of the young lady's horse; I had thus an opportunity of hearing the end of their conversation.

"And you really intend staying all your life here in the Caucasus?" said the princess.

"What is Russia to me?" replied her romantic cavalier: "a country where there is no soul, where there are thousands who, because they are richer than the poor subaltern, would look upon him with *hauteur*; whilst here, this coarse cloak has not been an obstacle to the supreme happiness I have enjoyed in making your acquaintance."

"Oh! on the contrary," replied the lady, with a blush.

The face of Frantovskoi expressed intense satisfaction. He continued: "Here my life will pass at least in wild excitement, and I may for a time escape the canker at my heart: the bullets of the wild mountaineers must be my only music now: and if a compassionate destiny would only once in a year send me the bright cheering ray of a woman's glance, sympathising, pitying, similar to——"

At that very moment they had approached so near me that we were all three in a line. I could not resist the temptation of showing myself, to let them know that I had accidentally over-



"My powerful Circassian bit enabled me fortunately to raise my horse upon his haunches."

heard this tender demi-confession, when suddenly my horse seemed to sink from under me. I instinctively struck my spurs into his sides and lifted him with the reins. I had come unexpectedly, while watching what did not concern me, instead of the path, upon one of those dangerous gullies. The spurs, however, had done their work, and, perhaps, saved my neck, for my horse bounded forward like an antelope across the dangerous fissure, and to my surprise landed me directly in front of the astonished pair. It required all my horsemanship not to have charged them; my powerful Circassian bit enabled me fortunately to raise my horse upon his haunches, while the princess naturally screamed, and added in French, "*Mon Dieu, un Circassien !*"

To tranquillise her completely, I bowed to her. I then apologised, and in the same language, somewhat mischievously: "*Ne craignez rien, madame, je vous assure que je ne suis pas plus dangereux que votre cavalier.*"

She was confused; but was it from having mistaken me for a Tscherkess brigand? or was it the twofold meaning of my last words? I rather incline to the latter opinion. As for Frantovskoi, he was evidently disconcerted and displeased; but I must confess I did not apologise to him.

Late at night, at about eleven, I quitted my quarters for a stroll under the linden-trees on the Boulevards. The town was perfectly quiet, and most of the inhabitants had already sought their beds; only here and there a light might be seen gleaming from some solitary window. From three sides the black peaks of mountains were to be seen in bold relief against the moonlit sky—the chains of the Mashouk, over the lofty head of which a tempest cloud was hanging heavily—the moon had risen in the east—while the snowy crests of the further ranges of elevations were gaily glittering in the distance. Suddenly I heard a quick and irregular footstep approaching me from the town. No doubt,

my friend Frantovskoi: men in love and in difficulties generally wander at night. It was he.

"Well met again," said I to Frantovskoi; "and where do you come from?"

"From the Princess Ohotnikoff's," he answered, with an assumption of cold and lofty importance. "How charmingly Anastasia sings!" he added.

"I have something for you," said I, somewhat maliciously: "I am ready to wager you fifty roubles—but that I am too certain of winning—the princess does not know that you are irredeemably but a cornet sergeant-major. She is under the impression, my poor friend, in her romantic innocence, that you have been only temporarily dismissed from a higher commissioned grade for some freak or folly."

"It may be as you say, but what do I care?" he answered, with an air of deep annoyance and affected carelessness.

"Bah! Frantovskoi, you would die of vexation; and I can tell you, that some good-natured friend will most assuredly make you the subject of conversation at the Ohotnikoff's; but of course this is only conjecture."

"And I must tell you," he rejoined, "that you have grossly insulted that young lady. She is of opinion that your equestrian performance was executed purposely, and that it was an act of unheard-of impertinence. I had much to do to persuade her that your education and habits were, or should be, far too much resembling those of decent society for you to be suspected of having intentionally offended her. She also added, that your looks are full of presumption and most objectionable, and that undoubtedly you are the most conceited person she ever saw."

"The princess is perfectly right—she possesses a just appreciation of character—and I am profoundly beholden to M. Frantovskoi for his amiable companionship. But would not you

like now, Frantovskoi, to break a lance in defence of your outraged Oriana?"

"I regret deeply that I have not yet the right," was his answer.

I was, however, nettled at his manner, and I presume there was something in my glance as I looked him fully in the face, that made him recollect my unhappy duelling reputation, and that I was not exactly a safe man to quarrel with. He turned his eyes away, and I could not help smiling to think I had allowed him to ruffle my temper. However, I have made a discovery—he already entertains hopes.

"It is all the worst though for yourself," continued Frantovskoi, in a far more amiable tone, and looking slightly confused, "for it will be now difficult for you to make their acquaintance, I assure you; and it is a pity, as you would have met in their salons one of the pleasantest circles I have been in for some time."

"The most agreeable house to me for the present is my own," said I, yawning languidly, as I rose to go.

"However, confess it, Zadonskoi, you regret you are now debarred from being presented to the lady."

"Nonsense!" said I. "If I wished it, I could be to-morrow evening at the princess's house."

"You are mistaken, Zadonskoi."

"On the contrary, I am right; and to oblige you particularly I will even pledge myself to pay particular attention to the young lady."

"That is, if she should choose to speak with you."

"I shall await only that identical moment, when your brilliant conversation will have ceased to interest her. Good night!"

"Well, good night!" said he. "I shall ramble for an hour or two: I could not sleep for the world. By the way, let us go to

the hotel; there is a little hazard doing there; and I stand in need of strong excitement."

"Then I wish you most heartily to lose."

I went home.

June 21.—A week has nearly elapsed, and I have not yet made the acquaintance of the Princess Ohotnikoff. I am now only waiting a favourable opportunity. Frantovskoi, like a shadow, pursues them everywhere; his conversation with the young princess is interminable, and she appears a little interested in him I must admit. When *will* she begin to feel bored by him? —it cannot be long before she discovers his utter emptiness. The mother takes little or no notice of him, for he is neither rich nor titled; he is not a "*partie*." This is maternal logic, I believe!

Ogla came yesterday, for the first time, to the springs. She had not been out since we last met in the grotto. We bent down at the same time to fill our glasses, and she said in a hurried whisper:

"Why will you not be introduced to the Ohotnikoffs? It is there only that we can ever meet."

Approach again already! But have I perhaps deserved it? However, to-morrow there will be a subscription ball, I understand, at the salons of the hotel, and I predict that I shall dance a mazourka with the young princess in spite of herself and her entire circle.

June 29.—The salons of the hotel had been thrown into reception-rooms for the nobility and celebrities of the town. At nine o'clock, being at a watering place, nearly all the company had arrived. The Princess Ohotnikoff, with her fair daughter, were among the latest comers; the women looked upon her, I perceived, with an eye of jealous scrutiny, because, I presume,

the Princess Anastasia dressed with simple elegance and the most exquisite taste. Those among them who consider themselves the aristocracy of the place have silenced their envy for the time, and tacitly ranged themselves under her leadership. How could it be otherwise? Wherever there is an assemblage of women, two distinct parties are instinctively formed, the higher and the lower circle. Frantovskoi was standing close to a window in his most imposing attitude, his arms folded across his chest. His particular romance for the moment was evidently the "alone in a crowd" style, and he did not for a moment allow his eyes to wander from his goddess; who, I noticed, scarcely moved her head in token of recognition, while passing close by him. Dancing had begun with spirit—first with a polka, and continued with a waltz; spurs were jingling gaily, robes fluttering, epaulets and decorations flashing, ribbons and ringlets flying and floating in the perfumed air, to the animating strains of a military band, that was pouring forth the brilliant and plaintive melody of the Indiana waltzes of Marchallow.

I was standing behind a lady of a certain age, of considerable *embonpoint*, with violent pink plumes; the showy colours of her dress, *à la Pompadour*, testified to her provinciality, and from the attention that was paid to her she seemed to be one of the notabilities of the neighbourhood. She was surrounded by a number of young officers belonging to the garrison, and I came to the conclusion that she gave good dinners, or that she had daughters with money. She was, however, in conversation with her immediate cavalier, a captain of dragoons, and I heard her make the following observations:

"This Princess Anastasia Ohotnikoff is a very impertinent little person! Only imagine: she ran against me in the last dance and did not apologise—on the contrary, she even turned round and stared at me deliberately through her eye-glass! What and

who is she I wonder, with her St. Petersburg airs? She ought to be taught better." The gentleman, as if struck by some sudden idea, bowed and left her precipitately.

I immediately presented myself before the princess, and asked for the favour of a waltz, as if I was doing the most matter-of-fact thing in the world; using in this instance the privilege of the place, which allowed a stranger so to do without a preliminary introduction.

She scarcely could restrain a smile, or hide her triumph. She believed she had fairly conquered me. However, she quickly succeeded in assuming an air of composure, and even of a certain coldness approaching to severity. She carelessly laid her fair arm upon my shoulder, bent her graceful head slightly on one side, and we launched into the waltz. I don't recollect ever having held in my arms a form more charming or agile. A mischievous curl, deserting its companions in the rapidity of our gyrations, was clinging to my burning cheeks. I made three rounds, but she was exhausted; her eyes grew dim, and her half-closed lips could scarcely whisper the indispensable, "*Merci, monsieur!*"

After a few moments of silence, and assuming an air of the most profound respect, I addressed the young princess thus:—

"I was informed, princess, though I have unhappily not the honour of being known to you, that I have the additional ill-fortune of having caused you some displeasure. Is it really so?"

"And now it would appear, Monsieur le Prince Zadonskoi, that you wish to confirm me in that opinion," replied she, with a little ironical grimace, which, however, is very becoming to the lively and *espiègle* expression of her countenance.

"If I have really displeased you, allow me at least now to take the still greater liberty of entreating your pardon: and,

frankly, I am anxious to avail myself of an opportunity to give you a better opinion of me."

"It will be very difficult, I assure you—to *you*."

"Why do you think so, princess?"

"Because you do not frequent our house, and these subscription-balls will undoubtedly not be often repeated, if, indeed, at all."

Which means, thought I, that the doors are to be for ever closed against me.

"Ah! but princess, mercy and goodness are so essentially the characteristics of the amiable and charming," said I with some little disappointment, "that I cannot despair; and pray remember that we should never turn away from a repenting sinner—in his despair he might commit some terrible enormities; and really——"

The laughing and whispering of those about us made me suddenly bring my "phrases" to an end, and look around me for the cause of merriment. At a few paces from us stood a group of gentlemen, and among them the captain of dragoons I before mentioned, who seemed, indeed, to be the principal personage. There was something going forward which appeared to afford him much satisfaction; he was rubbing his hands, laughing and whispering in high glee to his friends. Suddenly from the midst of them, and evidently at their instigation, a gentleman in black, with long mustaches, and a most repulsive face, rushes forward, directing his faltering steps towards the Princess Anastasia. He was hopelessly tipsy. He stopped full before the confused princess, and folding his arms behind his back, he fixed his dim, haggard eyes upon her, and addressing her in a thick and hoarse voice:—

"*Permettez—que—enfin—bah!* after all—simply, I engage you for the mazourka."

“What do you wish, sir?” whispered she, in a faint and trembling voice, casting an imploring look around her. Poor girl! her mother was at the other end of the room, and no one of her immediate circle was near her. I fancied I had caught a hurried glimpse of my smart little aide-de-camp, but that prudent gentleman had again disappeared in the crowd, no doubt with the laudable dread of being mixed up in an unpleasant affair.

“Well?” demanded again the tipsy gentleman, in a loud and interrogatory tone, while looking towards the dragoon for assistance, who, with his friends, was encouraging him by smiles—“D-d-do you object to dance? You, th-th-think, perhaps, that I am tipsy? Never mind that—one f-f-feels so much easier, I can assure you.”

I perceived that she was on the point of fainting from fear and shame. I at once went up to the bibulous transgressor, whom I now recognised as a billiard-playing provincial *mauvais sujet*; I grasped him strongly by his shoulder, and looking steadfastly into his eyes, I gradually but firmly pushed him into the middle of the room, while I informed him that the princess had long since been engaged for the mazourka with me.

“Oh! v-very well; it c-can’t be h-helped—(hic!)—splendid g-g-girl—isn’t she?” said he, smiling blandly and tipsily, as he rejoined his humiliated companions, who led him instantly into the next room.

I was rewarded with a look of the warmest gratitude.

The princess immediately explained all that had taken place to her mother, who at once came up to me in the crowd, and thanked me for the little service I had rendered her daughter. She informed me at the same time that she had known my mother, and was even then on friendly terms with half-a-dozen of my aunts.

“I do not know how it happened that we have not yet made

your acquaintance," added she; "but you must confess it has been entirely your own fault; you appear to us all to be avoiding every one, so that we really do not know what to make of you. Let me trust that the air of my salons will disperse your spleen. May I hope to see you?"

I thanked her in one of those phrases which every decent person is obliged to have in store for the uses of society, like glazed boots and white kid gloves.

The quadrilles were by far too long.

At last the orchestra struck up a vivifying mazourka; the princess and myself took our places. I was incredibly amiable and innocent that night, and I had the tact not to mention a word about the inebriated person who had annoyed her, or (at that time) to mention Frantovskoi. Her little affectations and assumptions began gradually to disperse; her pretty face bloomed again in its full glow of good humour and natural light-heartedness, and she became natural and playful in her conversation, which was ingenious and easy without pretension: her manner, in fact, was frank, lovely, and unconstrained. In a somewhat complicated phrase I gave her to understand that I had watched her since my first arrival at the springs. She bowed her head carelessly, but she imperceptibly blushed.

"You are a very strange person," said she, later in the evening, raising her eyes to my face with an involuntary smile.

"I was afraid of being presented to you, princess," continued I; "I have heard so much of your talents that I fear you are a very formidable person; besides, you are as usual surrounded by such a numerous body of brilliant admirers that I should have been lost in the crowd." All this was said with an air of deep respect, and with an affectation of candour and humility that caught the weak girl as it would have done many a cleverer woman.

"You are falsely alarmed," she replied; "however, they all bore me fearfully."

"All, indeed, princess; are they *all* so?"

She looked attentively at me for an instant, as if trying to recollect something; then, blushing slightly again, she replied with a tone of decision—

"*All!*"

"Even my friend Frantovskoi?"

"Is he indeed your friend?" she inquired with an air of half incredulity.

"Yes."

"Indeed I do not exactly place M. Frantovskoi in the category of those who cause me *ennui*."

"But perhaps among those who are unfortunate," said I, smiling: "your legion of martyrs."

"Just so! but it makes you smile. However, he is very agreeable and obliging."

"Poor fellow! he is, indeed. I was a cornet sergent-major myself once, and indeed it was the happiest period of my life."

"But is he really of no higher grade?" demanded she with interest; and then added, musingly, "and I who believed——"

"Pray, what did you believe, princess?"

"Nothing! Do you know that lady?"

Here our conversation turned upon another subject, and we did not again return to our former subject.

The mazourka had finished, and we parted—to meet again. The ladies began now rapidly to retire; I went to supper, and there I met with Wild, my eccentric and cynical doctor.

"Aha!" said he, "so you are here again, are you! Do you recollect your saying that you would not make the acquaintance of the most noble princess; or, at any rate, not without saving her invaluable life from imminent danger?"

"I have done better," was my reply; "I have saved her from appearing ridiculous in public, and at a ball, too."

"That is indeed something. How did it happen? pray let me hear?"

"No, you must guess; or what would be the use of that wonderful gift of yours of intuition. In the meanwhile I am going to my quarters. Goodnight!"

June 30.—At about seven o'clock yesterday evening I was walking on the esplanade. Frantovskoi, who had seen me from a distance, at once hastened up to me, with a peculiarly ridiculous satisfaction glimmering in his eyes. He strongly pressed my hand, and addressed me in a tone of voice more tragical than usual:

"I thank you, Zadonskoi! Do you not understand me?"

"Not in the least; however, there is no need for gratitude," replied I, "for I am not exactly conscious of any particularly good action towards you at present."

"And yesterday! Have you already forgotten? Anastasia has told me all."

"How is that?" I demanded; "is everything already, then, common with you—even gratitude?"

"Listen," resumed Frantovskoi, with an air of importance. "Pray do not trifle with my most sacred feelings: the heart is a holy thing, Zadonskoi. Do not start—look here: but I love her—love her to distraction; and I think, I hope—nay, I almost believe—that she reciprocates my passion. I have a favour to ask of you. You are, I understand, to be at their next reunion. Promise me to observe everything, and narrowly. I know you have experience in these matters; you can appreciate the divine qualities of woman perhaps even better than I can. Their smiles contradict their words, their words their smiles. In a moment

they can at their own sweet will discover our most secret thoughts, and then, again, ignore the simplest sighs or sounds. As for my adored Anastasia, she is quite as inexplicable to me as she is pure, true, and beautiful. Yesterday her eyes, whilst fixed upon me, were sparkling with sympathy and love; and to-day they are distant and cold; but you will assist me in watching and interpreting her every look—will you not? And what think you of the change since last night?"

"It may be probably attributable to the effect of the mineral waters," replied I, coldly.

"You look at everything from its wrong side. You are a perfect materialist," added he, looking actually disgusted.

We soon after parted; and I strolled home, considering whether the stage can produce farces as inconceivably absurd as those of real life.

At about nine o'clock we went together to the reunion of the Princesses Ohotnikoff.

In passing before Olga's residence I perceived her standing at the window; we caught a hasty glance of each other, and soon after she entered the drawing-room of our hostess. The princess-mother introduced me at once to her as her relative; we bowed as perfect strangers to each other—effort the second that day. Tea was served; there was a large and brilliant company, and conversation soon became general. I was especially anxious to please the elder princess. I ventured a few jokes, and succeeded in making her laugh heartily on one or two occasions—the more particularly as they became equivocal. The physician was right. Her fair daughter looked from across the room, as though she would have liked to join us, or at least to have known what so heartily amused her lady mother. She no doubt guessed, knowing her parent's amiable weakness; but she could not, of course, compromise the rôle of violent innocence she had chosen to play.

She appears to fancy that a languor of expression is becoming to her animated features : she may not, perhaps, be mistaken. Frantovskoi, however, seemed highly delighted that I occupied myself so exclusively with the elder lady.

After tea was disposed of we all proceeded to the larger salon.

"Are you satisfied with my docility, Olga?" said I, in a low voice, while passing her.

She cast a look upon me full of love and gratification.

I am accustomed to these glances ; once, however, they were my greatest blessing. They now give me pain, especially from her ; they are too suggestive of the past. The princess seated her daughter at the piano : all crowded round the instrument and entreated the favour of a song. I was not one of the party ; and profiting by the general bustle, consequent on the young lady's anticipated display, I followed Olga to the window, in obedience to a sign. She wished to tell me something, she said, of the utmost importance to us both. It proved to be, as is usual in such cases, nonsense.

Meanwhile my indifference appeared to displease the younger princess, as I could easily guess from a stolen glance full of pique and disappointment. Yes, fair lady ! I understand but too well this eloquent language, devoid though it be of sound. You are a coquette, but at the same time you feel a greater interest in me than in any of the dancing-dogs of society who are standing on their hind legs around you : and simply for the reason, that I am the very last person you should distinguish with your regard, and because I am the only one who is not supposed to adore you, but has actually treated you with the most marked slight and indifference.

She began to sing a showy cavatina from the "Nozze di Figaro;" her voice is fresh and clear, but she is no artiste ;

however, I did not listen. As for honest Frantovskoi, he had taken his position opposite to her, leaning upon the piano, surveying her with ardent and devoted glances, and repeating *delicieux ! charmant !* while nodding like a mandarin of strong musical taste.

"Listen to me, Zadonskoi," said Olga. "I do not wish you to make the acquaintance of my husband, but you must absolutely ingratiate yourself with the princess : it is not much for me to ask of you, and it is so easy for you to grant me my request ; you who can charm every one, if you only choose to do so ; besides, we shall only meet here."

"Only here, Olga ? It is well !"

She blushed, and suddenly continued with a quick impassioned vehemence that alarmed me.

"You know well, Zadonskoi, that I am your slave, for I never knew how to refuse you. Alas ! you ever possessed an influence over me that is inexplicable : but have pity upon me ; be generous : have I not suffered from the influence ?—and no doubt I shall suffer for it still ! At least I must repair the past. I must spare my reputation—not for myself ; this you know too well ! Oh ! I entreat you, do not torment me again, as formerly, with empty doubts, and real or simulated coldness. I may soon die, Zadonskoi, now, for I feel weaker, indeed, every day : and, nevertheless, I think only of you ; do not, then, be unkind to me. You men, you cannot understand the consolation of a look, the happiness of the loving pressure of the hand. I swear to you, that to listen to your voice only affords me greater happiness than the whole world else can give ; but we must not meet except here."

I was fearful she would have been overheard. I soothed her. I pressed her hands ; but we were both silent. What could I say : in reality, I felt relieved ; but such is the contradictory

nature of woman, that she would have felt piqued had I complimented her on her wild resolve, and positively hurt had she suspected that I had already made up my mind upon the same point.

Meantime the Princess Anastasia had ceased to sing. The echo of conventional praise was sounding around her. I came up the last, and paid her some purposely unmeaning compliment on her voice and execution.

She made a very pretty little grimace, while she shrugged her shoulders and advanced her lower lip with a look of patrician sauciness that was quite delightful. She proceeded across the room to take a seat, and I followed her.

"Your compliments are so much more flattering, M. Zadonskoi," said she, "that you have not, I believe, been listening to me at all; but you don't like music, probably?"

"On the contrary," I responded, "fair princess, especially after dinner."

She looked astounded, and rejoined thus—

"Monsieur Frantovskoi is right, then, in telling that you have the most prosaic tastes imaginable; and I find now, moreover, that you like music in a gastronomical point of view."

"You are again mistaken, princess. I am no gastronomist, for I have a very bad appetite: but music, like sentiment, acts disagreeably on my nerves; I become either particularly dull or excessively gay. The one as well as the other of these sensations is wearisome, more especially when one has for some time arrived at the conclusion, that there is nothing under the canopy of heaven worth eliciting them; besides, sadness in society is absurd (*à propos*, how triste our friend Frantovskoi looks this evening), and too much gaiety is undeniably vulgar."

While repeating this farrago of nonsense, I fixed my eyes vacantly upon Frantovskoi across the room, and spoke in a

dreamy, absent manner, as if utterly pre-occupied, and heedless of what I was saying, while I leant back, and swung a tassel of the curtain backwards and forwards. She, however, did not listen to all of it, but left me, to my great amusement, and went across to seat herself near Frantovskoi. This was supposed, I presume, to be my punishment, and they were soon engaged in a deep conversation ; it was apparently of a sentimental nature : but it seemed, nevertheless, as if the replies of the princess to the elaborate phrases of my friend Frantovskoi were somewhat incoherent, though she evidently tried to listen to him attentively. I observed that he looked at her several times with the utmost astonishment, at the absence of mind expressed in her unsettled looks and movements.

“I understand you well, lovely princess ; but take care of yourself ! you are playing with fire. I can see through you like a glass ; and like a glass, in matching yourself with me, you will be shivered. You wish to pay me with the same coin, and hurt my vanity ; you will not succeed, for your intention is palpable ; but if you declare open war, I shall give no quarter. I will for once appear humiliated to please you ; for if you once suspect my strength you will avoid me.”

In the course of the evening I tried several times to mix in their conversation, but she met my approaches with marked coolness on each occasion. I left them with an air of vexation, but with a meaning and kindly glance at Frantovskoi, as much as to say, “Be happy, oh ! my friend ! I see you are beloved ; far be it from me to interfere with your felicity : nay proceed ; confide in me ; I am interested in your loves.” The princess was victorious, but she was also excessively piqued ; for no woman likes to be supposed enamoured of a fool, more particularly by a man in whom she feels somewhat interested. Frantovskoi appeared absolutely enraptured ; he read in all this that the

result of my scrutiny was, that the princess really loved him. It was only yesterday he desired me to watch her so narrowly, and was so anxious for my opinion.

The remainder of the evening I passed near Olga, and we conversed earnestly on the past. Why does this woman still love me so devotedly—I, who have caused her so much misery—I; who am in reality so unloveable; while she, on the other hand, of all others, should understand my unhappy character, and knows but too well my faults and grave defects. Has evil really such powerful attractions?

I left the residence of the Princess Ohotnikoff in company with Frantovskoi. In the street he took my arm, and after a very long silence, he turned towards me suddenly, and said—

“ Well, Zadonskoi, what is your opinion now ? ”

“ That the princess is a *coquette*, ” I answered ; “ that you are in fool’s paradise, and that I am most abominably sleepy. Good night ! ”

July 6.—Lately I have not once deviated from my system. The princess I think begins to like my conversation. I have related to her some few passages of the most stirring and interesting portions of my life, but as if merely to account for those slanders of the world that I have suffered so much from, and she now scarcely hides from me that she thinks me a singular being: this is something, however; as women instinctively love exaggeration. I laugh at and ridicule everything in the world, but especially sentiment. This begins to alarm her, for she has already ventured an outpost skirmish of German sentiment with me. She has not attempted it again, or in my presence entered into sentimental discussion with Frantovskoi; and I observe that she has given him already a few caustic

replies to his Werther-like homilies, accompanied by a mischievous smile, intended for me; but still, every time I see Frantovskoi approaching, I assume an air of delicacy and fraternal regard, and leave them in a marked manner to themselves. The first time she was clearly surprised, or affected to be so; the second, she was obviously annoyed with me; the third, she was angry with poor Frantovskoi, and left him almost rudely to his utter astonishment. With me it hardly raised a smile; it was a matter of course.

This occurred several times, till one day she seemed to lose her self-possession, and she said to me hurriedly, when Frantovskoi had turned his back—

“You appear to possess very little discrimination or *amour propre*. Why should you think me more amused and interested in the society of M. Frantovskoi than in that of any one else—your own, for instance?”

I replied, with an air of the deepest humility, “That I was ever happy to sacrifice my own gratifications to the happiness of a friend.”

“And to mine,” added she, in an almost inarticulate voice: her head was bent down over a flower she was picking to pieces, but I could remark that her usually marble brow was flushed with crimson.

I looked attentively at her for a moment. I felt my own colour mount to my temples; but my part was instantly taken. I assumed an air of indolent reserve, and immediately asked her some question on a subject that I knew was most indifferent to her; and I scarcely waited for an answer before I left the house. I did not visit the princess all that day. In the evening, however, I again paid my respects; she appeared pre-occupied and *distracted*; the next morning still more so. If I approached her, she would listen with her eyes fixed on Frantovskoi, who

looked as if he thought himself like the cheap literature of the English—instructive and amusing—and who was just then eulogising and descanting on the beauties of nature and art. Scarcely had she caught sight of me, when she would burst into unmeaning laughter (entirely out of place), and would pretend not to have seen me. I went into the conservatory, which was in the balcony, from whence I could easily observe her without her being aware of my object. She was evidently not listening to her companion: she turned away from him, and gaped once or twice. Decidedly Frantovskoi, as I anticipated, has become an annoyance to her.

July 13.—I have lately often asked myself the question, why I give myself so much trouble about a young girl whom I should most certainly not wish to deceive, and whom I have not the least inclination to marry? Why all this flirtation, which I must do myself the justice to say no one can more fully appreciate and despise than myself?

What is it, then, that causes that uneasy interest on her account which I am almost ashamed to admit to myself—am I actually jealous of Frantovskoi? Poor fellow! he is not worthy of it. Or is it the consequence of that despicable feeling, which induces us to destroy the pleasant deceptions of our fellow-creatures, and which leads to nothing but the petty gratification of telling him in the moment of his despair, should he ask us what to think on what to believe:—

“My dear friend, it has been a hundred times the same case with me; however, you perceive I dine, I sleep and sup well, and I hope to die in peace some day without these trifling annoyances painng me particularly.”

Frantovskoi suddenly rushed into my rooms to-day and threw himself round my neck: he has been, it seems, promoted to a

commissioned rank. I immediately ordered some champagne on the strength of his promotion.

Wild, my cynical curer of bodies, made his appearance soon after.

"I sincerely condole with you," was his first observation to Frantovskoi.

"What! not congratulate me—why not?"

"Because the toga, your immortal cloak, was much more interesting to the women; and I know that if you fancied you ceased to be interesting you would cease to be happy: besides you will agree with me, that the Emperor's livery made in this place, and so looking as if it had been cut with a hatchet, will not add particularly to your distinguished appearance. Believe me, till now you have been an exception; to-day you enter the regular line of every-day mortals; and the women will no longer regard you, as they will not be able to believe that you had been reduced to your former grade for some amiable crime—such as killing some father or brother in a duel."

"Say what you like, doctor! you will never persuade me that I am not happier for these golden types of honour on my shoulders. He has no idea," continued Frantovskoi, with enthusiasm, "how many new hopes—what glittering dreams these epaulets have brought almost tangibly before me. Oh! epaulets, epaulets! ye bright stars! ye guiding stars to honour, glory, and an imperishable name to—to——"

"In fact, to the guardhouse," interrupted I, "if you punish the champagne so manfully."

"To the devil or a marshal's baton," interrupted the doctor, in turn, as he left the room; but he put his head again in at the door to add, "but I recommend the former, my dear M. Frantovskoi, as being far more interesting—to the women."

"Come," said I, "you are excited—moderate that amiable

enthusiasm of yours, and come out with me—let us take the air.”

“I? not for the world would I be seen by the princess before my new uniform is ready.”

“Shall I bring her the news of your triumph, Frantovskoi?”

“No, not a word, I beseech you. I wish to see her myself.”

“Tell me, however,” I continued, “how do your loves prosper?”

He became slightly confused and thoughtful: he would fain have boasted from sheer habit, but shame prevented him, and he hardly knew in what terms to generalise the question.

“Well,” I reiterated, “you are silent. Do you still think she loves you?”

“My dear Zadonskoi, what ideas those are of yours! How is it possible in so short a time? for love—actual love. And even if she were to love me, remember that she is a young lady of extreme propriety.”

“Very well! And accordingly, with this opinion, young gentlemen of extreme propriety must also conceal their passion.”

“My dear friend,” he replied, “everything must have its time; little is said, but still a great deal may be guessed.”

“True. But the love which we read in the eyes of a woman does not compromise her, whilst a word—— Take care, take care, Frantovskoi, that she does not deceive you.”

“She?” replied he, in raising his eyes towards heaven, with the air of an adoring cherub in its flight to paradise, and smiling with compassion at the benighted state of my earthly mind, “I pity you, Zadonskoi! blasphame not her purity—deceit! she knows not its name!”

And he went away.

In the evening I joined a numerous company of the visitors at the spa, who were walking towards the “breach.” In the

opinion of many learned and geological heads, this "breach" or aperture, as it is called, is nothing less than an extinguished volcano; it lies on a singular declivity of the Mashouk mountain, at a distance of about a mile and a half from the town. A narrow and serpentine foot-path among shrubs and rocks leads to the place. In ascending this difficult road I offered my hand to the princess as a matter of course, but she passed her arm through mine in the most natural way in the world, and retained that position during the whole promenade.

Our conversation gradually ended in that most agreeable and easy of all topics—namely, the abuse of our friends. I passed in review all our present and absent acquaintances: at first I made allusion to their ridiculous, and afterwards to their more objectionable phases of character. My bile began to rise insensibly with the genial subject—I had commenced jestingly and terminated in open *mechanceté*. At first she was amused, but at length she was startled at my bitterness.

"You are a dangerous person, M. Zadonskoi," said she: "I should be less alarmed, I think, to become the prey of a real Circassian brigand than to become the victim of your sarcasm. Pray tell me seriously if ever you intend speaking evil of me. I would rather you took your sabre and killed me at once; I dare say you could do that easily."

"Do I really resemble such a murderous miscreant, princess?"

"You are worse, I fear," was her response.

I was pained at her words, though they were simply ridiculous; they called up, however, a world of secret feelings—the weak girl I almost despised had touched a hidden chord of my wayward heart unknowingly, and, moved by an irrepressible impulse, I burst into a flood of tears that astonished as much as it afterwards annoyed me; nevertheless my emotion for once was genuine. It is true, indeed, that my childhood, like

my youth, was fearfully mismanaged: I was singularly positioned in both cases, and to the faults of those who should have loved and those who should have watched over me I can deduce much of my froward disposition and contradictory character. It may have been thus that I addressed the astonished princess:

“Yes; such has ever been my fate from my very cradle! All believed they could read in my face indications of what did not in reality exist: they anticipated evil in the strange and unhappy child they so little understood, and so created it. I was naturally gentle; they accused me of malice and deception. I became sullen and reserved; my childish mind grew embittered, and I became revengeful. I was pensive and quiet, and they thought me obtuse because other children were gay and playful; I thought myself better than they, and I was placed below them! I became jealous and envious. I could have loved everyone, but no one sympathised with me, and from an early age I learned to hate. My cheerless youth was passed in continual struggles with myself and the world; my tenderest feelings, in fear of exposing them to ridicule, I hid in the depths of my heart. This taught me to hide other feelings there, and made me in time a consummate actor; and I am afraid those bitter feelings now have died within me. I spoke the truth religiously at first; I was not believed—and they taught me to deceive. I studied the world and the secret springs of society, and I became early initiated in the science of life. For me there was no innocent childhood, no sunny boyhood; what I am now I have ever been—the form was childish, and afterwards the face was fresh and beardless, but the nature was the same; and when I found that I had arrived at manhood, and that the world was still for me unchanged, false, weary, and resourceless, despair stole into my heart—not that wild orgie of passion which can be terminated by the contents of

a pistol, but a cold, sickening, and powerless apathy. I have become a moral cripple; one-half of my heart has lost its sensibility—it has dried, and is dead—whilst the other beats but in restless bitterness and vain regret. But with the former portion I fear I have buried most of the elevated feelings and generous aspirations that ennoble manhood, and that gild the morning freshness of our youth. But you have inadvertently struck a painful note of all the discord of my memories; you have but now awakened in me the recollection of it, and I have read you its epitaph. With many an epitaph is provocative of ridicule, not so with me; and yet I sneer at most things. I do not ask you to sympathise with me, but I do entreat you to pardon the egotistical folly, if not impertinence of the rhapsody I have been guilty of: believe me it was involuntary; and if my nonsense should make you smile, pray laugh freely, I merit it for the sentimental absurdity I have committed, and I can assure you it will not offend me."

In that moment I met her eyes—tears were trembling on their dark lashes; her arm was leaning with more confidence on mine; she was trembling; her cheeks were burning; she pitied me for the moral leprosy I had so wildly unveiled to her. Pity is a dangerous feeling for a woman to admit into her heart in some cases; perhaps this was one of them. But it was so; sympathy, a feeling which so easily gains ascendancy over a young and sensitive woman, had gained the mastership over her inexperienced heart. During the remainder of our promenade we were both almost entirely silent, but she was also sad and pre-occupied, and she now leant heavily upon me. Woman's nature is certainly a paradox: I had described myself, in that unwonted burst of feeling, as the unamiable and dangerous thing I am; almost admitted myself a villain, and that I was suffering from the effects of a mind ill-regulated from the cradle; and yet my

unhappy experience tells me that had I but hinted I loved her she would have fallen into my arms.

We had now arrived at the "breach:" the ladies left their cavaliers, but she did not quit my arm. The remarks of the many men of her acquaintance who were present hardly elicited a reply from her: the towering and dizzy precipice near which we stood did not even alarm her; her mind was far away, whilst the other ladies of the party retreated from the sight in terror, and closed their eyes.

In returning homeward she still remained with me. I made no further allusion to our previous conversation. She was still sad and silent; to my conventional remarks and observations she gave but short and absent replies.

"Have you ever loved?" I at last and suddenly demanded.

She started and looked attentively at me for a moment, and then, shaking her little head, she fell again into her former reflections. She evidently wished to say something, but she knew not how to begin it, and she still remained silent: but her bosom was beating high, and she trembled violently. A light muslin robe is but a weak and flimsy shield for a woman's secret emotion!

"Tell me, Monsieur Zadonskoi, have I not been very amiable to-day?" said the princess to me, with a faint and affected smile, when we had returned from our promenade. We were now at the door of her residence.

I bowed with marked ceremony, and we parted.

She is not satisfied with herself; she accuses herself alternately of forwardness and indifference. Why is not Frantovskoi in my place? This most important triumph—as it would be to him—would make him truly happy, and he could appreciate the distinction that the princess would thus confer on him. It is ever so in life: we either sigh for what we cannot attain, or we depre-

ciate and neglect that which is within our reach; and which, perhaps, if we could only think so, would constitute our greatest blessing. To-morrow she would be mine if I ask her, and upon my own terms. I would try and persuade myself that I regret this weakness for the poor girl's sake, but that my secret heart is all elated at its success. This is mean, vile, petty, paltry, and base, but it is also human nature. Unfortunately I anticipate everything—that is what annoys me.

July 12.—To-day I have again seen Olga. She has tormented me (the old story) with her jealousy. The princess, I guess, has hit upon the original idea of choosing her as a confidant to whom to unburthen her heart as regards myself. I must confess a most unhappy choice!

“I have a presentiment how all this will end,” said Olga to me, in a tone of petulance; “tell me at once that you love the Princess Anastasia?”

“But let us suppose on the contrary that I do not love her.”

“Why, then, persecute her? why torment and work upon her imagination? I know you too well, Zadonskoi! Listen to me, if you wish me to believe in your regard, to trust in you—rejoin us in a week from to-day at Kislovodsk; to-morrow or the day after we shall leave this place; the Princesses Ohotnikoff remain here for some time longer. Engage apartments next to us at Kislovodsk; we are, I understand, to take the house next to the fountain; the princesses will occupy the lower portion of it, and the adjoining house is still to let, and belongs, I believe, to the same proprietor. Will you come, Zadonskoi? For once avoid this new temptation to your egotism and vanity, and leave Anastasia for this week to her own reflections; the feelings I cannot but think you have awakened in the silly girl are, no

doubt, ephemeral, and if you will but avoid her for this short interval, all may yet be well. Tell me, will you do this?"

Her advice was good, though, like that of a great many people, it originated in her own selfishness, her own little passion and jealousy. I promised, however, all she wished; and the same day I despatched an express to engage the house in question for me.

Frantovskoi honoured me with a visit at about six in the evening, and informed me with breathless excitement that his new uniform—the *uniform*—would be ready for the ball the ensuing day, epaulets and all.

"At last," exclaimed the enraptured subaltern, "I shall have a chance of dancing the whole evening with her. It will give me also the opportunity to speak to her," he added.

"When is this ball, then," I demanded; "did you say to-morrow?"

"To-morrow! Is it possible that you did not know it? It is to be a grand affair; and the authorities of the town and all the notables here have undertaken to make it as brilliant as possible."

"I have not the slightest objection," I replied; "and we, I suppose—we shall make two fools more among the many. In the meanwhile let us go on the Boulevards and take the air."

"For nothing in the wide world in this wretched cloak, Zadonskoi!"

"Poor unhappy cloak," I responded. "Ah! Frantovskoi, how rarely in this world a man knows his best friends. When you cast that old slough of romance of yours for the showy encasement you are so elated at adopting, you will regret it before a week is over in many ways, and about that time you will have to regret something else; and listen, in your ear, you will probably consult the princess on the subject. Good evening!"

"What on earth do you mean, Zadonskoi?"

"Good evening," I reiterated, and left him.

I proceeded alone upon the Boulevards, where I met the Princess Anastasia : I engaged her at once for the mazourka. She appeared surprised and perhaps gratified.

"I thought you were only an occasional or a compulsory dancer, like the last time," said she, with a charming smile, alluding to the part I had taken at the last ball as regards the vinous gentleman who so publicly annoyed her.

She appears most angelically resigned to the absence of Frantovskoi.

"You will be agreeably surprised to-morrow evening, princess," observed I to her.

"What with, pray?"

"It is a secret," I rejoined; "at the ball you will guess it."

I passed the evening by her invitation at her mother's house; there was no other company except Olga and an old gentleman whom I did not know. I was in good spirits for the improvisation of various extraordinary stories to amuse the ladies. The younger princess was sitting opposite to me, and listened to my nonsense with such deep, rapt, and even tender attention, that I began to feel the situation rather awkward. What has become of her usual liveliness, her coqueties, her little caprice, the frank and open expression of her face, her arch and mischievous smile—all gone, all changed to sadness and pre-occupation.

Olga, buried in a large chair, watched us narrowly. I could well imagine what was passing in her mind, for her face was very pale, and her lips were strongly compressed in a manner that betrayed inward suffering. When she found that I was looking at her, she gradually pushed her chair further back into the shade of the window. I felt really pained; I could not address her as she would have wished me, and any merely polite drawing-

room observation would have wrung her heart at such a moment.

I was just then relating the dramatic history of the intrigue of a friend of mine who had not long before been shot in a duel, and expired in my arms: this fatal affair had made some noise at the time, and I was requested by the princess to recount the details; in doing so I had to mention the heroine of the catastrophe, and in doing so—and in describing the more amiable and interesting traits of her character, I alluded to and meant Olga, who, of course, alone, of those who were assembled, understood my meaning.

I painted vividly her tenderness and unwearying devotion, and alluded to so many delicious trifles of the past, that were known but to herself and me, that she could not but have understood me. My original attempt to soothe her jealous feeling was eminently successful, and after a time she appeared to accord me her forgiveness for the attentions I was compelled to pay to the young princess.

She rose from her seat—indeed, drew near to us—and became absolutely cheerful, and we only recollected at two o'clock in the morning that the physicians of the spa most despotically command their patients to retire at ten o'clock at night.

July 13.—About half an hour before it was time for us to present ourselves at the ball Frantovskoi paid me a visit, radiant in all the glory of his new uniform. To the third button-hole of his coat a short gold chain, with an eye-glass, was appended, though I had never known him complain of short-sightedness. The epaulets were by far out of proportion, almost verging upon the next grade, and were bent in the air like the wings of Cupid. His boots creaked in all the pride of novelty and French enamel. In his left hand he held a

pair of white kids and his new laced foraging-cap ; with his right he was playing with the ambrosial locks of his curled (not curly) hair. Intense self-satisfaction, mingled, perhaps, with a little uncertainty, was expressed in his face. His holiday appearance and rolling swagger would have made me laugh heartily at any other time—human absurdity is to me so refreshing ; but this once I had to restrain myself, for reasons of my own.

He threw his gloves and foraging-cap upon the table and began anxiously to examine and arrange his costume before the glass in my dressing-room. The immense black neck-cloth, with which he had covered an over-high and ultra-military stock, was thus by an ingenious self-torture elevating his chin in the air at an angle of thirty-five degrees, and protruded by half an inch above the collar of his uniform : but this, it seems, was not high enough for him ; he pulled it upwards till his ears seemed in danger of being cut off. From all this exertion, and from the tightness of his collar, which was very ill-made, his face was flushed and almost swollen as if he was about to burst a blood-vessel with a tremendous explosion, leaving nothing but his eye-glass and his romantic memory behind him.

“I have been told, Zadonskoi, that you have been exceedingly *amiable* towards my lovely princess during these several days,” said he, carelessly, and already assuming the air of a young man of fashion, but without looking at me, as he was still struggling to get out of his collar like a stolen dog.

“*Ghdé nam, dourakam telai piét ?*” * replied I, quoting a passage from one of our immortal Pushkin’s well-known novels.

“But now, Zadonskoi, tell me candidly, does my uniform fit me well ? Oh, most accursed Jew ! how it cuts me under the arms ! How the Philistine has encased me. Oh !—— and have you any scent ?”

* “Where are we poor fools to take tea ?”

"For heaven's sake have no more, Frantovskoi! You smell, already, at six yards' distance of that infernal cheap rose pomatum."

"Never mind, let me have a little."

He poured half of the contents of an eau-de-Cologne bottle behind his neckcloth, handkerchief, and sleeves, and seemed to me to drink the remainder.

"Are you going to dance?" he asked me.

"I don't think I shall to-night," I replied.

"Indeed," he rejoined; "I am afraid I shall have to open the mazourka with the princess. I scarcely remember a figure of it."

"Have you engaged her for the mazourka, Frantovskoi?" I inquired, indifferently.

"Not yet: not exactly."

"Take care not to be disappointed."

"Ah, bah! nonsense, *nous verrons*," said he, in a tone of perfect conviction.

"Farewell! I must be off; for I intend to await her arrival at the entrance of the ball-room."

He picked up his cap and gloves hastily and left me.

An hour later and I followed him. The street was dark and lonely, but a concourse of persons was crowding and pushing round the door of the assembly-room in the hotel; the windows were brilliantly illuminated; the animating sounds of an excellent military band floated fitfully forth on the gusts of wind. I walked slowly, for I felt very sad. Is it possible, thought I, that my only destination in the world is to destroy the happiness and illusions of others? And yet it has ever been so. Chance has, by some inscrutable means, connected me with the fatal issue of the views and hopes of people, in whom I have not often been interested; it would seem as if no one could possibly despair, be

essentially wretched, or die, without my co-operation! I have continually, by a kind of fatality, been the indispensable personage in the fifth act of a serious drama; and how often it has occurred that I have involuntarily been obliged to play the sad part of the executioner or traitor. Why and wherefore is this? or is it but the preliminary to my becoming myself the subject for a tragedy or a novel. Who can tell? Destiny alone can show.

Upon entering the ball-room, I at once saw that my arrival had not yet been remarked. I took advantage of this circumstance to screen myself behind a group of gentlemen, and thus began my observations with greater facility. Frantovskoi was standing "in waiting" behind the princess, and he appeared to speak to her with great warmth; she listened to him, however, carelessly and inattentively, looking around her; and playing nervously with her fan; her face expressed impatience, and her eyes were evidently seeking some one. I approached so quietly from behind them, that I even overheard a part of their conversation.

"Why will you torment me, princess?" murmured Frantovskoi; "or have you changed since I last saw you?"

"You have *also* changed," replied she, casting a quick glance upon him, in which poor Frantovskoi was far from suspecting a hidden meaning.

"I? I have changed?" exclaimed the bewildered amoroso. "Oh, never! You know it is impossible, princess. He who has seen you once takes with him your divine image, for ever daguerreotyped upon his heart."

"Pray cease, Monsieur Frantovskoi," said the princess, almost peevishly.

"Why—why will you not listen now," continued he, "to that which but so recently and so frequently you have heard with so much condescension?"

"Simply because I hate repetitions," replied she: "the most

amusing things become fatiguing after a time; and the tirades of Monsieur Frantovskoi have long ceased even to be amusing."

"Your pardon, princess," said the poor fellow, whom I now sincerely pitied: "I have sadly deceived myself! Fool that I was—I had even imagined that these epaulets would at last give me the hope of continuing the friendship your kindness allowed me so happily to commence. I am mistaken, and, it would have been better for me to have continued to wear for ever the poor soldier's cloak, to which, perhaps, and to your compassion, I owe the distinction of ever having been honoured by your smiles."

"The cloak certainly became you far better," said she, with the most cutting coldness.

At that moment I approached them, as if having just entered, and bowed to the princess; she blushed slightly, and continued quickly—

"*Apropos*—is it not true, Monsieur Zadonskoi, that the grey cloak was much more becoming to our friend Monsieur Frantovskoi?"

"I do not agree with you, princess," replied I. Frantovskoi looked at me with eyes beaming with gratitude; but the mischievous devil in my nature made me add—"In his uniform he looks by far younger."

Frantovskoi could not stand the hit; like all very young men he affected the air of a man of six-and-thirty. He has a private opinion, too, that "the deep shades of stormy passions have," as he would say, "grasped at future years, and prematurely stamped the seal of time upon his brow." He cast a furious look upon me; and left us suddenly.

"You will confess," said I to the princess, "that if he had then as now the happy facility of appearing particularly ridiculous, he not long ago also possessed the advantage of being somewhat interesting—in his grey cloak."

She cast her eyes down to the ground, but gave me no reply.

Poor Frantovskoi followed the princess the whole evening with his despairing eyes, fanned her with his reproachful sighs, and annoyed her with his absurdities.

"I did not expect this from you," said he, in coming up to me during a pause in the dances, and taking an imposing attitude.

"What am I to suppose you to mean?" I asked, carelessly.

"You are about to dance the mazourka with her," said he, in a hollow and sepulchral voice; "she has informed me of it."

"Then, my dear friend, I should almost conclude, were I you, that it is no secret; particularly as I have the honour of telling you the same thing," said I.

"Oh! it is quite natural; I ought to have anticipated as much, And to be treated thus by a mere flirt, an unmitigated coquette—a—a—but I shall retaliate; never fear but I shall find means."

"I think you had better find a partner just now, my dear Frantovskoi; reproach your romantic cloak or your gorgeous epaulets, but why abuse the princess—is it her fault if you cannot please her any longer?"

"Why, then, give me such very marked encouragement, such legitimate hopes?"

"Why did you hope? To wish and to seize the thing desired, I can understand that; but who hopes? You simply missed the opportunity—*voilà tout*—except this that I suppose she is a woman, and you were as absurd to expect mercy, truth, and consistency from her as you would be to look among your friends for honour and generosity in these matters."

"You have won everything at present, Zadonskoi, but you have not quite broken the tables," replied Frantovskoi, with a bitter smile; "and remember that in love, as in play, I am entitled to my *revanche*."

The mazourka commenced, but, thanks to Frantovskoi and several others, I had not an opportunity of addressing the princess. This was evidently done to annoy me. It was all for the better; she obviously wished to speak to me, but it was impossible for her to do so—she will be, afterwards, twice as anxious for a *tête-à-tête*.

I pressed her hand twice in the dance; the second time she withdrew it, tremblingly.

"I shall pass a restless night, I fear," said she to me, "Monsieur Zadonskoi," after the mazourka was over.

"That will be the fault of Frantovskoi," I responded.

"You are mistaken," she murmured; and her face became so thoughtful in a moment, so serious, and so preoccupied, that I gave myself the permission absolutely to kiss her hand that very evening.

The company soon after began to separate. In assisting the princess to her carriage I quickly, but stealthily and softly, impressed a kiss upon her little hand. It was dark, and no one could have seen it.

Good intentions! good intentions! where are you? I went to that ball with a far different feeling; and now I regret all this as I am writing in the solitude of my chamber. But at that moment——

Round a large table in the public coffee-room of the hotel a noisy company of young men was seated at supper, and Frantovskoi was among them. The conversation was loud and animated; when I entered the room, however, all became suddenly quiet—evidently they had been speaking of me, and believed I had returned to my quarters. Some among them have good reason to be annoyed with me from the occasion of the last ball, and more particularly the captain of dragoons, who, previous to my entrance, seemed the most noisy of the party. It would appear that this clique is decidedly concocting some attack upon me, under the

leadership of my friend Frantovskoi. He has adopted the air of a Spartacus—"he must and will be free." *Soit*, my meek friend, but in striking off your fetters beware that they jangle not too discordantly on my ear—I may brain you with them yet.

I am glad of it—I like enemies, although not apostolically; they amuse me and bring my blood in circulation. I love to feel the old devilish sensation of cold and pitiless determination stealing once more through my veins. And so they were silent when I appeared among them—I have then a name, it seems. There are times when I have regretted my unhappy reputation: at this moment I rejoice at it. The poultry-yard is silenced when the shadow of the falcon sails across its sunlit limits. They have heard of me, then; and they shall find, too, that my eye and hand are as unerring as ever, and my heart as ruthless and unsparing, if they cross my road or intrude their petty importunesses upon me.

Monotony, I may now again for a time escape you! and, after all, dangers and excitement are the true joys of the bold and restless. Not mine, however, be it to take the initiative, or even to see what is going forward till I am compelled; but *gare à qui me touche*—and *then*.

Frantovskoi, as I afterwards understood, only made the acquaintance of the dragoon at the supper-table to-night. I *feel* that both these men are my foes from to-night—and why not?

July 14.—This morning Olga and her valetudinarian spouse left the springs of Pjatigorod for those of Kislovodsk. I met their travelling carriage this morning, while proceeding to pay a visit to the Princesses Ohotnikoff. She slightly bowed her head in token of recognition, but in her looks I could read reproach and discontent.

I sat with the princess' mother for more than an hour this

morning; it was hard work in its way, and Anastasia did not make her appearance. I understand she is indisposed: nor have I seen her this evening upon the esplanade. It is but a case of *après bal*, I hope. The new conspirators are armed with eye-glasses, and have now fairly adopted a threatening bearing. It is as well, perhaps, that the younger princess is confined to the house; they might otherwise have rendered themselves guilty of some impertinence either to or before her, which I should certainly now take upon myself to chastise. Frantovskoi looks disorderly and desperate, as though he had been drinking all night to concentrate his valour. He appears to be in earnest, and it is possible, for his vanity has been most egregiously hurt. There are people, however, whose despair even is ridiculous.

I returned home early; I felt dissatisfied—that something was wanting. Is it that *I have not seen her*? *Is she really ill*? and can I be *épris* with her? Bah—nonsense!

July 15.—At eleven o'clock in the morning, the auspicious hour when I am informed the elder princess is generally perspiring in her bath, I passed her domicile. The young princess was sitting close to the open window: seeing me, she rose. The interpretation was obvious, and I at once entered the house.

I walked into the ante-room. There was no servant, however, to announce me, and I, using the privilege of the very unceremonious arrangements in vogue here, at once entered the *salon* without the propriety of that necessary antecedent.

A strange pallor was spread over the lovely face of the fair girl. She was standing near the open piano, leaning with one hand upon a *fauteuil*. This arm I perceived trembled slightly, but very slightly. I approached her slowly, and addressed her thus, respectfully:—

"Are you really displeased with me, princess?"

She cast a sorrowful glance upon me, and shook her head; her wan lips moved, but her utterance was not at her command. Her eyes filled with tears, and she suddenly sunk heavily into the arm-chair, and covered her charming face with her trembling hands.

"What affects you thus, princess?" I demanded, taking her hand gently in mine; but she drew it away suddenly, saying, in smothered accents—

"Zadonskoi, you show me no mercy! Oh, pray, leave me! Leave me now!"

I made a few steps in obedience towards the door, and she, of course, raised herself from the chair. Her eyes were animated.

I stopped upon the threshold, and taking hold of the handle of the door, I said to her:—

"Pardon me, princess! I have done wrong; it shall not occur again. I have intruded upon you in more ways than one. In the meanwhile, I will atone by quitting this place at my earliest opportunity. I again claim your indulgence, and I once more bid you farewell."

In turning from the door I fancied I heard her weep. I listened: I was right. She was sobbing convulsively, but in a suppressed tone. I heard my name; I could not be mistaken. Yes, she called me. I was on the point of returning. Had I done so, an explanation would probably have taken place, and all would have been well; but my evil genius, or hers, willed it otherwise. I quitted the house, and from that moment the tamed coquette was irretrievably in my power.

I roamed about till the evening in the environs of the Mashouk. I was very much fatigued when I returned home. I dined, and afterwards, I threw myself on a sofa completely exhausted.

Wild, the physician, was announced.

"Is it true," demanded he, "that you are going to marry the young Princess Ohotnikoff?"

"And why should you ask me this?" said I.

"Oh! as for me," he continued, "I doubt it entirely, because the whole house is full of it, and, indeed, has already decided the matter. All my patients are preoccupied with the all-important news; but still it looks serious, as the men are abusing you, and the women abusing the lady and pitying you."

This is a practical joke of my friend Frantovskoi, thought I.

"To prove to you, doctor, that this piece of information is utterly absurd," said I, "I will tell you in confidence that I even leave to-morrow for Kislovodsk."

"And the Princess Ohotnikoff also?" said the doctor, drily.

"On the contrary, she remains here, I believe, for some time longer."

"Then you disclaim the perpetration of a marriage utterly?"

"Utterly, doctor. Do I appear 'rejoicing like a bridegroom?' Do I look like one in any way? Do I even resemble an *amoureux de l'age d'or*? And if one was to marry every woman one is 'talked about' with, I should have to take to Mahomedanism and the seraglio."

"Very true," rejoined my cynical acquaintance; "but then all bridegrooms are not rejoicing. There are some instances, too, that I have heard of," added he, with his peculiar smile, "in which a gentleman is morally or criminally hurried into a marriage; and there are also parents and daughters who are somewhat anxious to facilitate such arrangements: and thus I advise you, as a friend, to be prudent and wary. The air has very singular effects here at the springs. And, on the other hand, I have known many a man married here when he least expected it, who afterwards discovered elsewhere a few things when he least

wished it. How many young and beautiful girls have I not seen, worthy of a better fate, quitting the dangerous atmosphere of this place straight for their graves, and so chastened by suffering, I suppose, and charitably disposed, that—would you believe it?—they actually wanted to marry me! It was not long ago either that an ancient lady of title had a very pale and interesting-looking daughter to give away. I had the misfortune to understand the daughter's malady, and to tell the mother that the young lady would recover her lilies and roses after marriage. She astounded me by a burst of gratitude as unexpected as unnecessary; and, hailing me as the preserver of her daughter, she offered me the hand of her darling child in holy matrimony, together with her fortune, consisting of some hundred and fifty serfs,* if I remember; but I replied, with all due humility, that I was not worthy of the distinction."

The physician here left me, convinced, I think, in his own mind, that he had fully outwitted me this time.

From this conversation, however, I could surmise that some unpleasant rumours had been disseminated concerning the princess and myself: for this Frantovskoi shall yet answer dearly.

* In the wealth and fortune of the Russian nobility, the number of their serfs is looked upon as an indication of their riches.

CHAPTER V.

July 18.—Three days have already elapsed since I have been established here at Kislovodsk. I see Olga daily at the springs and on the promenades. In the mornings I lounge about my windows and ply my opera glass upon her balcony; she has been dressed long since, and waits but for the concerted signal; we often meet as if accidentally in the gardens behind our houses, leading to the sources of the springs. The reviving air of the mountains has vivified her drooping freshness and strength. It is certainly not without some foundation that the spring of Nazzan is called the “wonder-working fountain,” whilst the inhabitants of the town protest that the atmosphere of Kislovodsk is replete with love, and that all the final scenes of the romances are played at their town, which have originally commenced their first chapters at Pjatigorod and the foot of the Mashouk. All seems suggestive of sleepy and voluptuous mystery: the dense and overhanging branches of the linden-groves are arching over the springs that are falling and foaming from platform to platform with a plaintive and dreamy sound, and making their bright and gurgling way between undulating hills; and then the caverns and grottos, so cool, refreshing, dark, silent, and solitary, and the freshness of the aromatic air, filled with the scent of fragrant grasses and wild acacias and other plants of that southern climate; and the continual murmurs of the cold springs, which unite at the extremity of the plain, rushing fondly to mingle together and depart into the bosom of the Podkoumook. In that direction the caverns are larger, and change in many places into green pathways, intersected here and there by the sandy high road. Each time when I look upon this road I expect to behold a car-

riage I am well acquainted with, and a rosy face I know far better, looking forth from its window. Many a carriage has passed this way, but not the one I wish for. In the village behind the fortress stands an hotel upon a hillock. At no great distance from my house I can see the fires now shining through the windows of this building and a double range of poplar trees, whence the sounds of singing, shouting, and the ringing of glasses are echoed.

Nowhere are Kahitian wine and mineral water drunk so much as in this little place. But to mingle these two elements, it appears, is an art greatly to the taste of those who find it palatable: I am not one of their number.

Frantovskoi is here; he and his clique are revelling every evening in yonder hotel, and we now scarcely even bow to each other.

He only arrived the day before yesterday, but has already had an opportunity of quarrelling with two respectable and invalid old gentlemen, who, it seems, wanted to bathe before him. His misfortunes have developed in him his latent bellicose propensities.

July 22.—The princess has at last arrived here. I heard the noise of her carriage wheels, whilst sitting near my window; my heart beat quicker at the sound. What can all this mean? Can I possibly be growing attached to this weak girl? I am so singularly constituted as regards contradictions that even this absurdity might occur.

I have dined with them to-day. The old princess cast several tender looks upon me, but does not quit her daughter for an instant. I am afraid her intentions are not honourable. We are clearly culminating towards a given point; but Olga, on the other hand, by way of an equivocal consolation, teases me to death with her preposterous jealousy.

July 24.—This day was remarkable for several interesting events. About two miles from Kislovodsk, among the singular caverns through which flows the Podkoumook, and which I mentioned before, is a rock called the “Ring;” it is a natural circular fissure in a towering rock, that stands upon a hill of some considerable elevation; the setting sun was throwing its last fiery glance through it upon the world. A numerous and brilliant cavalcade had set forth to witness the pouring of the sunset through this curious window. It was a sight certainly well worth seeing, but very few of the company, I can venture to say, were in the least occupied with the sun; each particular fool was mated for the time, and flirtation seemed to be the only end of life. I for one, or rather as chief fool “in waiting,” was riding by the side of the fair Princess Anastasia. In returning home, we had to cross a portion of the Podkoumook by fording. Even the smallest of the mountain streams of this wild region is dangerous to pass, because their beds, like the changeful phases of the kaleidoscope, are continually in a state of mutation, owing to the violent and unremitting rush of waters from the mountains: where there was a stone yesterday a deep hole might be seen to-day, and so forth. It was for this reason that I took the bridle of the princess’s horse, and led it into the stream, which was not much above the knees of the animal; we advanced slowly and carefully, obliquely and against the current. It is a well-known fact, that in passing through rapid streams it is very dangerous to look upon the surface of their rolling waters, as giddiness and loss of presence of mind often ensue with many persons. I forgot unfortunately to caution the Princess Anastasia upon this point.

We were already in the middle of the ford and in the most rapid part of the current, when she suddenly turned deadly pale; swayed to and fro on her saddle, as though about to

fall. "I feel ill," she murmured in a faint voice. I instantly bent forward towards her and encircled her slight form with my arm. "Look upwards, princess!" I exclaimed; "it will soon pass over; be not alarmed, I am with you."

She soon felt better, and made a half movement to free herself from my embrace, but as my arm was still pressed round her soft waist, she with a Christian view as to the forgiveness of injuries, not only permitted the temerity I had attempted, but even leant her charming person towards me, in tender obedience to the pressure, till her head was close to mine: my cheek now nearly touched hers: I felt her breath, hot with emotion, but pure as incense.

"Heavens, Zadonskoi! what are you doing with me?" said she in a stifled voice.

I hardly noticed her painful confusion at the time; perhaps I was too much excited myself; but almost before I knew it, my audacious lips had swept her silken cheek; she shuddered slightly and sighed deeply, but did not say a word; we were riding far behind our party fortunately, and no one could have witnessed this strange little episode. We had, however, nearly overtaken our advanced guard, and I was about to relapse into the "open order" of strict propriety, but the dangerous proximity of our attitude still continued when we perceived that they suddenly urged their horses to gallop towards the town. The princess, on the contrary, rather retarded than increased the deliberate walk of her horse. I still remained near her; it was evident my silence preoccupied and disturbed her mind, but I had vowed to myself not to utter a syllable, out of pure unadulterated mischief, for I was most curious to see how she would contrive to get over this peculiarly difficult and delicate position. Suddenly she raised her lovely head, and looking at me with a flushed brow, and eyes flashing through

their tears, she exclaimed with concentrated emotion and an energy almost startling—

“Zadonskoi, you either love me dearly, or you utterly despise me. Oh! can it be that? You wish to trifle with me, to excite within me feelings of which I should be ashamed and then abandon me—to make me your puppet—your toy—that would be cruel, base. It cannot be. Oh! no! it is impossible,” added she with a voice now slightly broken and plaintive with tenderness and confidence: “is it not so, there can be nothing in me, Zadonskoi, to have provoked such a want of generosity? Your temerity—all—I must, I will forgive, because I am myself to blame; but do not, I entreat you, trifle with me. Answer me, speak to me, Zadonskoi; I must, I *will* hear your voice!”

Her last words were so full of womanly impatience that I could scarcely forbear smiling; fortunately it was already dusk; but I did not utter a word in reply.

“You are silent?” continued she in a bitter tone; but she added, in a loud and passionate voice, as she again turned towards me in her excitement, “You wish me perhaps to be the first to tell you, that you are loved?”

I remained *still* silent, with my eyes still fixed as before on vacancy, and my face perfectly expressionless.

“Do you wish it?” she reiterated again.

In the almost fierce decision of her look, and the harsh, unnatural, and elevated scream of her usually gentle voice, there was something appalling.

“Mademoiselle la Princesse,” I began, coldly, slowly, deliberately, and still without looking at her, as before;—villain that I was! never was the wayward devil that holds my very soul in his grasp more powerful than at that moment.

The princess was usually a timid horsewoman; but at once on

this, as if involuntarily, she struck her horse savagely with her tiny whip across his flanks, and bounded on before me at a full gallop along the narrow and dangerous road: this occurred so suddenly that I could hardly overtake her headlong pace, and then only when she had already rejoined the remainder of the astonished party. To the very door of her residence she did nothing but laugh, joke, and talk the most absurd nonsense in the most excited voice. In her movements there was something feverish and strange that alarmed me; but I remarked that she never looked at me—not even once. All appeared to observe her unaccountable flow of spirits and good humour with surprise, and her mother was secretly rejoicing in looking at her, at the success of certain plans, which I suspect that excellent old lady had for sometime entertained; while poor Anastasia, in melancholy truth, was the victim of the nervous excitement and feverish irritability consequent upon their disappointment.

Poor girl, thought I, she will pass a sad night, and tears will be less strangers to her eyes than sleep. This idea, strange to say, does not shock me as it should do. Am I becoming a fiend in reality? There are moments when I begin to fancy that I should be shunned like a vampire. Alas! if I could only make the women believe *that*, I should, on the contrary, have a thousand more opportunities of being the unamiable eccentric I am than at present.

On quitting their saddles the ladies proposed, in accordance with an invitation, to spend the evening with the Princesses Ohotnikoff. I was too much agitated with the events which had just taken place to make one of the party, so I turned my horse's head and galloped towards the mountains, to try, if possible, by swift motion, to disperse the ideas which had crowded into my head with a painful intensity.

The balmy evening was delicious in its refreshing coolness; the moon was just showing her broad and silvery disk from behind the dark heights. Each step of my horse was slowly re-echoed from the silent caverns. Near a waterfall that honey-combed the ground in all directions I watered my horse; and after having greedily inhaled for some time the breeze of that sweet southern evening, I turned my bridle towards home. My road lay through the village. It was getting somewhat late; the fires in the houses began one by one to disappear; the sentinels on the walls of the fortress and the neighbouring Cossack piquets outside the town were slowly shouting their challenges through the night.

In one of the houses in the village, situated upon a rising ground, I perceived an unusual light; now and then loud voices, songs, and shouts of laughter were to be heard, announcing that in that quarter military orgies were going on. I set foot on ground, from sheer curiosity, and strolled up to the window; the shutters were carelessly closed, and I could not only see, but even hear the words of the assembled revellers within. It was worth hearing for a wonder; they were speaking of me!

My old acquaintance, the captain of dragoons, evidently heated with wine, struck his fist violently upon the table and claimed attention.

"Gentlemen," said he, "this is all nonsense, and it must not last any longer. We must teach this Zadonskoi a lesson. These St. Petersburg *incroyables* will always play the important until you quiet them down. This young fellow clearly fancies he is the only man in the Caucasus who has lived in the great world, because he possesses a decent fortune, talks slowly like a priest, wears clean gloves and boots of French enamel in the morning."

"And what a patronising smile he vouchsafes us! He can look insolently, too, our friend, and yet I have a very strong suspicion that this wondrous courage of his is more prudently tinged with discretion than we any of us suspect," added an artillery officer of the line attached to the fortress, a particularly vulgar-looking person, who, I can safely aver, I never saw before in my existence—to observe him at least.

"Frankly, I believe as much," exclaimed my amiable friend Frantovskoi; "he has adopted lately a pleasant method of getting off with a joke from the consequences of those insolences of his. I told him a few things a little while ago, on hearing which I believe any other man I know would have sabred me on the very spot; but our philosophical Zadonskoi turned the whole affair most conveniently into ridicule. I, of course, did not call him out, because it was not for me to do so under the circumstances, if he would not take the hint like any other Christian."

"Yes, but Troilus Frantovskoi here is *acharné* against Zadonskoi, because he has robbed him of his priceless 'Cressida,'" said some one of the company.

"Bah! what do you mean?" said Frantovskoi. "It is true, I believe, that I flirted for a little while with the girl, but I have given her up for some time now; in the first place, because I do not choose to marry her, and as for compromising a girl of her rank, the thing is, of course, inadmissible."

"Yes, gentlemen, I can assure you that he is the greatest coward (I mean Zadonskoi, and not Frantovskoi); Frantovskoi is a brave fellow, a capital fellow, and besides my very best friend," said the dragoon, who was now *in vino sopiti*, if not *in vino sepulti*. "Gentlemen, is there any one among you who chooses to take his defence? N-n-nobody! all the better! Now I have something to propose to you all. Should you like to try his courage? It will amuse us."

"Capital idea! Famous! Glorious!" they all chorussed; "but how?"

"Very well, then, listen: Troilus here is particularly offended, I take it; let him take the first part. He will easily find an opportunity to have Zadonskoi over the coals. But wait a moment; here comes the joke. The duel is settled upon: very well. All things concerning it, the preliminaries, preparations, conditions, shall be as solemn and imposing as possible; trust to me as regards that; I shall be your second, of course, my poor injured shepherd. Very well. But here is the point of the arrangement: the pistols shall not be charged with ball. And I warrant you, Zadonskoi shows the white feather. The devil singe me but I will place them at six paces! Do you agree, gentlemen?"

"Could not be better! Excellent! Capital joke!" was shouted simultaneously by this interesting symposium, from all sides.

"And you, Frantovskoi?" demanded the dragoon.

I waited Frantovskoi's reply with a feverish impatience, and my blood ran cold within my veins with rage and hatred, when I considered that without the fortuitous advent of this accident, I might have become the laughing stock and indirectly the victim of these fools. If Frantovskoi repudiates the treachery, I shall throw myself round his neck and once again attempt the dangerous experiment of admitting a man to my heart's hospitality as a friend. But after a moment's silence, he rose from his seat and deliberately stretched his hand forth towards the captain, and said, with an air of importance—

"Be it so; I agree; but I only wish it was in earnest."

It would be difficult to describe the satisfaction of the whole party at the result thus satisfactorily arrived at.

I returned home; I was agitated, and with many conflicting

feelings. The predominant one was sadness : why do these fools all hate me ? thought I ; and what for ? Have I offended any single one of them ? No ; I have simply held myself aloof from them. Do I then really belong to that class of people whose mere appearance is sufficient to excite antagonism and malevolence ? And I felt by degrees that my heart was filling with the old devilish feeling of a pitiless and almost calculating ferocity. Take care, Frantovskoi, thought I, while walking up and down my rooms : you are playing with fire. I am not thus to be trifled with. You may yet have to pay right dearly for the freaks of your friends ; I am no plaything, believe me ; as soon play with a torpedo.

I did not close my eyes throughout the whole of that night. The next morning I was pale, sick, and feverish.

In the course of the morning I met the Princess Anastasia at the fountain. I was not aware of her presence till she spoke. I was lost in thought. I was even startled, and I was surprised she should have spoken to me, at least, so soon ; and should have been the first to do so.

"You are suffering, Zadonskoi ?" said she, anxiously looking at me.

"I had no sleep, princess."

"And I neither. I have offended you, I fear ; certainly unintentionally. But explain yourself. I would forgive you all."

"Really *all*, princess ?"

"All—but speak the truth Zadonskoi—speak it quickly. Look you, I have been striving to understand your strange conduct—you cannot mean to slight me—your eyes do not deceive me ; explain, or rather I understand your sentiments—you are quixotically honourable, Zadonskoi,—but you anticipate difficulties which perhaps do not exist—that is when all (here her voice began to tremble), all shall be known ; or (and she

burst into a violent flood of tears), or tell me is it your own position—believe me, I am capable of every, *every* sacrifice for the man I love. Oh! answer me quickly,—Zadonskoi have mercy. Another moment's silence will make me loathe myself for ever. You do not scorn me, do you? Oh! speak!" and in her excitement the poor girl grasped my hand in hers almost convulsively.

The princess' mother was walking before us with Olga's invalid husband; they fortunately had not seen anything of this extraordinary scene; but we might have been observed by the promenading convalescents who were all around us, the most curious and the most gossiping perhaps of all inquisitive people, and I therefore quickly but gently disengaged my hand from her passionate pressure.

"I will candidly tell you the truth, princess," replied I to her: "I shall not even pretend to attempt an explanation to justify my conduct, but I have one duty—there is one thing—it is imperative for me to tell you—simply—princess, I have never loved you!"

Her lips quivered slightly, and she grew pale.

"Leave me," whispered she in a hoarse but scarcely audible voice.

The mother was approaching; I bowed gravely and respectfully as I turned away.

July 25.—I have so frequently had occasion to hate myself that this may perhaps be the reason that I so despise others. I have lost, I fear, even my tendency towards generous impulses. I so heartily detest mankind that I am afraid of appearing ridiculous in my own opinion by giving way to them. Another in my place, under such peculiar and delicate circumstances, would have at once offered the princess his hand, his heart, his fortune, and his name; but upon me the simple dissyllabic word *marriage*

has a peculiarly repugnant effect. However my heart may have softened towards a woman, if it is ever so remotely conveyed to me, that it is expected by herself or others that I should marry her,—adieu to the charm ! it is gone ; I look upon myself as an object to be *attained*, and in which my own inclination, views, and prejudices are not even a secondary consideration ; my heart then appears to ossify, and nothing from that quarter can animate it again. I am ready to make every sacrifice for a woman I like, except one, and that I account for because I find it so difficult to *love* a woman in my sense of the word, and perhaps because I, to a greater degree than my fellow-men who are not yet mated, flatter myself with the prospect of meeting one day with the bright ideal—the one phantom object of our own creation that is to embody all our criterion of perfection, and which in reality most probably does not even exist. It is for this reason that I have such a dread of parting with the worthless liberty I enjoy. Of what use is it to me ? to what will it carry me ? what charm does it still retain for me ? None !—absolutely not one. *Vanitas vanitatum*—verily all is vanity. But I am habituated to my position, as I am to my weary life, generally : and matrimony, like suicide, involves changes of a serious nature—the details of which we dread, but know nothing of. I have also a presentiment on this point essentially my own. There are some people, and of the strongest minds, too, who are unaccountably antipathetic to cats, mice, insects ; there are some men, too, who, with hearts of triple steel, are yet as superstitious as school-girls. Hence I am the less ashamed of my confession. When I was still but a mere child, a *tchyganka** told my mother's fortune, as the phrase goes, in my presence ; my turn came afterwards, and she foretold, among many things which by a series of coincidences have really

*A gipsy-girl.

taken place, that my early and sudden death would happen from the hand of a jealous wife. Ever since that time, this absurd prediction, as it is, has rung ominously in my ears at the very name of marriage, and hence perhaps my remarkable aversion to that holy state. And notwithstanding all this, something whispers to me that the prophecy will by some means accomplish itself in spite of me; however, I will use my best exertions to delay my fate as long as possible.

July 26.—Yesterday the famous conjuror Monsieur Robin arrived here in Kislodvsk. Upon all the walls and on the doors of the hotels, large placards and hand-bills were posted, for the purpose of informing the nobility, gentry, and the public in general, that the above-named celebrated professor of natural magic, prestidigitateur, mesmeric-operator, and chemico and optico delusionist, would have the honour of giving the first of a very limited series of entertainments this evening: to commence at eight o'clock precisely, in the salon of the nobility (otherwise at the hotel); admission two roubles and fifty copeks assignation.

All the visitors and the entire town were preparing to witness the surprising feats of this king of jugglers; even the Princess Ohotnikoff, who was not to be detained from the spectacle by the slight indisposition of her daughter, also took a card.

This afternoon I passed by chance under Olga's windows; she was sitting alone in a listless attitude on the balcony; a note flew from the window and dropped at my feet: it was short, but certainly to the purpose; it ran thus:—

"I shall expect to see you this evening at ten o'clock; come by the front staircase: *As* has left for Pjatigorod and will only return to-morrow

morning. The servants—even my own maid—will all be from home; I have presented them with tickets for this evening's entertainment of Robin at the hotel; they will go with the princess' people. I shall be watching for you anxiously myself. Fail not, but come! We leave here soon, and I may never perhaps have an opportunity of seeing you again alone in life. There are documents I would destroy, too, in your presence. I must see you, and much may depend upon your visit.—Adieu, and *fail* not."

I must go then. Am I pursued by a fate?

At eight o'clock I went, however, to see the miraculous Robin. The public had already arrived, and the performance had already commenced. On the benches ranged at the back of the assembly-room I recognised the male and female servants of Olga's establishment, and that of the Princess Ohotnikoff. Frantovskoi was *posed* elaborately in the front-rank places with his glass fixed in his eye; his affectation was amusing when the magician plagued him every moment for the loan of his handkerchief, watch, chain, ring, &c. I have observed that Frantovskoi has not bowed to me now for a length of time, but this evening he even dared to look at me once or twice with a cool and undisguised insolence. All this I feel is tending to a point: all, all, shall be remembered at our reckoning day.

At about ten o'clock I rose, as if by accident, and left the room. The street was dark and silent—so dark, indeed, that I could hardly see my hand before me. Cold and heavy clouds were looming from the summits of the neighbouring mountains; now and then a gust of wind played wildly among the ghostly poplar trees that were ranged in front of the hotel, the doors and the windows of which were surrounded by a curious multitude, all anxious to see and criticise the appearance and costume of the visitors as they arrived to witness the spectacle going on within. I descended the mountain, and turning towards the town I began to hasten my steps. Suddenly I fancied I heard the steps of some one walking behind me. I stopped at once and looked

around me. It was so dark that I could of course discover nothing; however, for the sake of prudence, I strolled round the house carelessly, as though taking a walk that was entirely without an object. Passing under the windows of the suite of apartments occupied by the Princess Ohotnikoff, I again heard, or fancied I heard, footsteps stealing warily behind me. I paused, and a man wrapped in a long cloak passed swiftly on before me. This made me uneasy; however, I hid myself for a moment in the shadow of the projecting roof of the house, and awaiting a favourable chance, I stole in upon the dark staircase. It was as dark as pitch; I mounted slowly, feeling my way. Suddenly I thought I heard the rustle of a dress, then the hurried breathing of a woman, and at last a little hand caught hold of mine: at the same time a door was opened, and I recognised Olga standing on the threshold of (what seemed after the darkness) her brilliantly illuminated apartments.

"No one has seen you, Zadonskoi?" she demanded, leaning on me.

"No one, Olga!"

I entered into the room, which she carefully fastened, and I sat down to hear all she had to say. Alas! for womankind and common sense, she had nothing to communicate, of all the important things I had anticipated. She insisted on retaining my miniature, and refused to burn my letters; she snatched them off the fire indeed when they were partially consumed,—and all my arguments and entreaties were unavailing to make her consummate the work of destruction.

Women! women! ye are certainly inexplicable!

Her heart was beating wildly, her hands were cold as ice; her revelations were but a string of reproaches dictated by the most unbounded jealousy, complaints and regrets. The rendezvous was but a trap to discover my real position with Anastasia. She

entreated me to confess all and everything, promising to listen with resignation and to bear the recital of my treachery and barbarity with all fortitude, because, after all, she only wished for my happiness. However, I had nothing to tell her, and I certainly should not have fallen into that very well-known and palpable feminine trap if I had known. I sought to soothe and tranquillise her with vows, promises, and protestations; but alas! poor Olga, I could well guess by her flushed countenance and excited eyes, that those were not the protestations she either wished for or had perhaps expected.

"Then you are not to marry Anastasia?" she reiterated; "and you would have me believe you do not love her? But she believes—do you know it, Fedor?—poor girl, she loves you to distraction." Here she burst into so violent a flood of tears that I was myself moved—who can resist a woman in tears? I consoled her.

* * * * *

At about two hours perhaps after midnight I opened the window gently, and having tied two of her shawls together, I let myself down gradually from the upper balcony to the lower one appertaining to the apartments occupied by the Princesses Ohotnikoff. In the young princess's room, in front of which I had immediately descended, a light was still burning. The curtains were not entirely drawn across the window, and I could consequently cast a glance of curiosity into the room. The fair Anastasia was stretched languidly upon her couch; her white and rounded arms were carelessly thrown behind her head; her dark hair was gathered under a little French cap composed of the richest lace; a large scarlet shawl covered her shoulders, and her small feet were hidden in richly embroidered Turkish papooshes. She lay there in deepest reverie, her eyes fixed dreamily upon the opposite wall; but for the faint colour in her cheeks she might



"The fair Anastasia was stretched languidly upon her couch; her white and rounded arms were carelessly thrown behind her head."

have been taken for a statue. A book lay open, with its face downwards across her knees; it was evidently some time since she had turned a page of it. Her eyes were full of a wild and inexpressible grief, and tears were trembling upon the silken fringes of their long lashes. She seemed as she lay there, in all the unstudied negligence of her luxurious beauty, as if posed for some stage effect: the hour, the place from which I saw her, the half light in her chamber, the scarlet shawl, the white and polished arms and shoulders, the showering wealth of her dark hair that fell around them; the glittering light reflected on her gold-embroidered slippers, all combined to shed a strange unreal effect upon the scene. She looked surpassingly beautiful—I could not restrain a movement of admiration. She was startled and sprang from her couch; at the same time she probably saw the gleam of my epaulets through the glass of the window; she might even have caught the outline of a man through the panes, though she could not possibly have recognised me. With one bound she was at the casement, I saw she was about to scream; I placed my finger on my lips supplicatingly—I was recognised—her face grew crimson with anger—I feared she would have given the alarm, and I clasped my hands together in entreaty. My anxious features must have amply betrayed at that moment the sincerity of my emotion. Suddenly she covered her face with her hands. I turned away to leap from the balcony. The princess pronounced my name in a voice of deep and concentrated mental agony. I turned involuntarily at the sound; her face bore a strange indefinable expression, but I remarked that this time her hand was on the fastening of the window. At the same moment I heard (and all I have described had taken place in less than a minute), I heard a noise over head, as though Olga was about to open her window: the position was no doubt interesting, but admitted of no delay. I was again about to spring headlong almost from the balcony,

when I plainly perceived the shadow of some one moving through the bushes on the lawn. Again I paused, but again I heard that Olga was opening her window, and I sprang down at once into the garden. Scarcely had I touched the ground when an invisible hand was laid with some force upon my shoulder.

"Aha!" said a deep voice, that I thought I knew; "have we got you my friend? We will teach you to clamber after princesses at night, like an amorous house cat!"

"Hold him fast!" shouted some one else, in rushing forward towards us from behind the shrubs.

It was Frantovskoi and the bold dragoon.

I had learned, among other erratic accomplishments, boxing in the English fashion, which enabled me to deal the latter hero a blow on the head like the kick of a horse, which made him measure his length on the ground, while at the same time I threw off Frantovskoi and darted among the bushes. All the walks and details of the garden were familiar to me, and I was safe comparatively from discovery.

"Thieves! guards! thieves! patrol!" shouted they, at the same moment that I heard the report of a musket, the smoking cartridge of which fell close to my feet.

A few minutes later I was in my rooms and in bed; but scarcely had my servant locked the door, pursuant to my orders, when Frantovskoi and the captain of dragoons arrived at the landing place and began to knock violently. "Zadonskoi, are you asleep? are you at home? what the devil are you at?" shouted the dragoon.

"I am sleeping," I exclaimed, angrily.

"So it seems," answered he. "Rise, the devil's in the town—thieves—the Circassians—they'll catch you in your bed—get up, Zadonskoi."

"I have a villanous cold," replied I, "and I would sooner catch a Tscherkessian than a worse one."

They went away. I was sorry I had answered them; they would probably have been seeking for me otherwise an hour longer. The uproar, however, continued to increase: Cossacks arrived from the fortress; the town was all awake again; a minute search for the Tscherkesses had commenced in the fatal garden, it seems, and among its parterres and flower beds. Of course, they found nothing; but many, no doubt, particularly the civilians and women, continued under the impression that if the garrison had displayed a little more zeal and alacrity, but especially more celerity, a dozen or so, at least, of the marauding mountaineers would have remained as prisoners to the conquering eagles of the Russias, or would have expiated their villany upon the battle-field.

July 27.—There was no other topic at the springs this morning except the terrible incursion of the Tscherkesses during the night. Having drunk my regular quota of glasses of the mineral nectar, I walked several times up and down the poplar alleys, and met by chance with Mr. Borisoff, the husband of poor Olga, who had but returned that morning from Pjatigorod. He took my arm in the most amiable way in the world; and insisted upon my taking luncheon with him at the hotel: the excellent old man had been particularly alarmed, it appears, on account of his wife.

"Ah! I assure you, you have no idea sir," said he, "how much the dear creature was frightened during this fearful foray of last night. Only imagine her, blessed saint," he added, "throughout that lonely night, with no one to console her—sweet seraph; and it was fated to happen, too, just during my absence."

I gave him no answer, and we sat down in an apartment near a door which led into a side room, where I could perceive about a dozen young men occupied like myself; among their number was Frantovskoi. Chance or fate, it seems, would have it so, that I should have a second opportunity of overhearing what was said; and this time perhaps the conversation was to decide both our fates. Frantovskoi could not see me, consequently I could not mistake the import of what he said; the feeling of hate and disgust which I already entertained for him but increased.

"But now, do you really believe that it was the Tscherkossians?" said some one of the company. "I shall never believe it; it seems really too absurd; besides no one seems to have seen them."

"Shall I tell you the whole truth?" replied Frantovskoi. "It is too good to be hidden, I confess; but you must promise to keep the secret. Well then it happened thus: Last evening a person, whose name I will not mention, came a little after ten to inform me that he had seen a certain individual whom we all know, a little before that time creeping stealthily into the house of the Princess Ohotnikoff. I must here observe to you that the Princess Ohotnikoff was at the assembly with the rest of us, if you remember; but her fair daughter was at home,—indisposed, of course. We walked together to the princess' house, and were waiting for the fun of the thing beneath the windows, to give a reception of our own to the happy Lothario."

I must confess, I began to feel alarmed at hearing these *mal à propos* revelations; though my companion was busily engaged with his luncheon, he could, however, have over-heard a few things that might have been somewhat unpleasant to him, could he have understood the tenor of what was going forward. But Frantovskoi, blinded with jealousy, did not suspect Olga for a

moment, and so made no allusion that could have alarmed my ancient companion.

"Allow me to proceed," continued Frantovskoi. "As I said before, we set out and we took a musket with us, of course loaded only with blank cartridge, just to awaken the happy intruder to the realities of this melancholy world of ours. We waited patiently till nearly two o'clock, smoking cigars in the garden. At last—God knows where he came from, but certainly not out of a window, for I must admit that no window was opened, but no doubt he issued from the glass door behind the pillar: at last, as I said before, we saw some one quietly letting himself down from the balcony. How do you like that of our timid little princess, our unapproachable dragon of patrician virtue? Ha? Well, I must confess, these Moscovite ladies!—what, in the name of all that's violently virtuous, are we to believe after that? We wanted, however, to capture our Don Giovanni, but he contrived to elude us, and escaped like a hare among the shrubs, and then, by the bye, I had a shot after him to accelerate his pace."

Frantovskoi's tale was received with something like incredulity; it was perhaps too serious a matter to be treated lightly—even by the precious clique there assembled.

"You do not appear to believe me, gentlemen?" continued he: "I give you my word of honour as an officer and a gentleman that such is the fact—the triste and simple truth, and were it necessary as a proof, I could name you the man so distinguished by the preference of the fair lady."

"Speak, Frantovskoi; tell us who it was," was demanded on all sides.

"Prince Zadonskoi," replied he after a moment's pause.

At that moment he chanced to turn round, and to his astonishment he perceived me standing in the doorway, opposite to him; he coloured deeply and seemed disconcerted. I went up

to him slowly, and thus addressed him calmly and deliberately : " I very much regret, Lieutenant Frantovskoi, having entered this room, particularly after I have had the misfortune of hearing you give your word of honour, as an officer and a gentleman, to affirm the most base, villanous, and cold-blooded calumny. Had you perhaps seen me before, my presence might have spared you the committal of so dastardly an act, and would also have spared you the present humiliation."

Frantovskoi sprang from his chair and was about to resort to some act of insolence in his passion—but he was restrained by his friends.

" Hear me, Lieutenant Frantovskoi," continued I in the same tone : " I pray you, sir, to retract your words immediately ; you know well the fatal consequences of such a report. These gentlemen cannot, I am sure, believe that the indifference of a beautiful and interesting woman to your remarkable worth and accomplishments deserves so gross an outrage, so cruel a revenge. Reflect, I entreat you, sir, that in maintaining your opinion from mere bravado, you blast the honour of a noble lady who has never injured you, you lose the right to call yourself a gentleman, and you may also risk your valuable existence."

Frantovskoi stood before me a prey to conflicting emotions, and his features worked almost convulsively, though his eyes were cast down. But the struggle between shame and vanity did not last long. His Mephistophetic friend, the captain of dragoons, was sitting next to him and evidently pushed him with his foot ; he started and replied quickly, but I remarked that he could not look me in the face.

" When I say a thing, sir, I believe it, and I am ready to repeat and to maintain it. I fear not your threats any more than I do yourself : I am prepared for all consequences."

"Be it so," I replied, bowing stiffly, and taking the arm of the dragoon, I left the room.

"What is it you wish?" asked the captain.

"You are a friend of Lieutenant Frantovskoi," said I, "and you will probably be his second?"

The captain bowed in acquiescence, with an air of importance.

"You have guessed rightly," he added somewhat superciliously. "I am, as it were, even under the obligation to do him this service, because the insult you have thought proper to put upon him is also indirectly put upon me; it was I who was with him last night, M. Zadonskoi," and he hereupon drew himself up to his full height most heroically.

"Ah! then it was you, my dear sir," I said with an air of provoking *bon-homme*, "whom I had the honour to hit so genially on the head last night. I assure you that my unhappy knuckles have been aching ever since. By the Lord, sir, it was like knocking down a pump. How singularly hard your head must be, my dear sir: pray have you never heard it remarked before?" I demanded with the most innocent but insulting simplicity.

He became livid with rage; one of the most curious panoramas of evil passions I ever saw pass across a repulsive countenance; however, his annoyance was so great that he could not find words to express himself.

"I shall have the honour, Captain Pistoletnikoff, of despatching my second to wait upon you at the earliest opportunity," added I, bowing very politely, and without paying the slightest attention to his excitement and passion.

In the gallery of the hotel I again met Olga's worthy husband; he appeared to have been waiting for me somewhat anxiously.

"You are a gallant gentleman, Prince Zadonskoi," said he,

while he grasped my hands nervously in both of his, and with the tears standing in his eyes. "I have overheard all—everything. What an ungrateful, shameless young scoundrel! after all the attention, kindness, and hospitality my kinswomen have lavished upon him! And then to have admitted such people into one's society! But all this comes of the reprehensible laxity of these watering places. Thank God, I have no daughters, however! But you will be rewarded by her for whom you have risked so much. In the mean while, be assured of my esteem, present and future," continued he, "and of the gratitude of her family, who, I can answer for, will ever be beholden to you. I was young once myself, Prince Zadonskoi, and I have served under the shadow of the Imperial eagles; I wish you every success—count upon me if you should need me in any way: but I can understand that in such matters no one has a right to interfere. Farewell, prince!"

Poor old man! he is rejoiced that he has no daughters.

I went straight to Wild's domicile; I fortunately found him at home, and informed him of all that had taken place, with some prudent reservations; and I gave him every detail of the two conversations it had been my singular fate to overhear, from which I learned the secret sentiments and intentions of those gentlemen towards me. I did not omit to mention to my cynical friend the practical joke it was originally intended to have played upon me, with regard to the mock duel to test my courage with bulletless pistols. But things had now assumed another character, far more serious; they, no doubt, very little suspected such an issue to their projected jost.

The physician was willing enough to act for me in the affair. I thanked him, and at once gave him a few instructions as regarded the conditions on which I meant to meet my adversary; I instructed him principally to insist that the encounter was to

be kept as secret as possible, for although I am at any moment prepared to venture my life, and upon the veriest trifle, yet I am not a little alarmed to lose my reputation *tant soit peu* in this world.

After this preliminary arrangement I returned home. An hour later the physician rejoined me, to enlighten me as to the result of his expedition.

"There is truly a conspiracy against you, Zadonskoi," said he. "I met the captain of dragoons at your antagonist's, who is so much with him at present, and another gentleman, whose name I did not catch. I stopped for a few moments in the ante-room to take off my coat. There was a great deal of noise, and everybody seemed talking at once; nevertheless, Frantovskoi's voice predominated; he was saying to some one, 'I shall not agree to it under any consideration; he has this time given me public offence; before, it was quite another affair.' 'I take all the responsibility upon myself,' replied the captain, for I could see him through the door, which was ajar: 'I have been second in five duels, and ought to know how to arrange these matters; I have everything. Frantovskoi, my boy, only do not interfere; there is no harm in testing the fellow's nerve, and in making him shake in his shoes if he is found wanting, and why should you expose yourself to danger if—' At that moment I entered, and they ceased their colloquy. The arrangement of the preliminaries lasted some time; however, we at last agreed mutually upon the following terms:—At about three miles from the town here there is a narrow lonely pathway, which I will show you; they will be there to-morrow morning at four o'clock; we are to follow them half an hour later; you will meet at six paces; upon this condition Frantovskoi himself insisted. The death of the one who is doomed to fall will be attributed to some innocent Tscherkess. But I have my own suspicions, Zadonskoi; they are terrible ones,

indeed, but they are strong within me, and I should not do my duty towards you were I to confine them to my own mind. I believe it possible, then, that these precious seconds have but little changed their former plans, and that they intend charging but one of the pistols with ball,—Frantovskoi's, of course. This appears to me very much like a deliberate murder; but in time of war, especially Asiatic wars, and with scoundrels like these, such ruses I suppose exist; we must be prepared; however, Frantovskoi seems more of a gentleman in this than his worthy comrades. What do you say? how shall we act in this delicate matter? shall we inform them at once that we have guessed their scheme?"

"Not for worlds, my dear doctor! be perfectly easy; they shall not have to boast of any advantage over me."

"But what do you intend doing?"

"That is my secret."

"Oh! pray keep it then;—the result is, after all, of so little consequence to any body, and of such very infinitesimal interest to me; but you will, I suppose, remember that you meet at six paces."

"Bravo, old cynic!—excellent—well, adieu; I shall expect you to-morrow morning at four o'clock; the horses shall be ready. Farewell."

"I remained the whole evening at home, shut up in the solitude of my rooms. A servant called to invite me to the house of the Princess Ohotnikoff; I sent word that I was suffering from severe indisposition.

* * * * *

It is two o'clock, and I cannot sleep. Yet I ought to rest a little, my hand must not tremble to-morrow. However, I can snuff a candle, and hit the ace of diamonds at fifteen paces; and at six it would be difficult for the veriest tyro to miss the mark.

Ah! Frantovskoi, fool! your precious plot will not succeed—we shall change parts—and I shall have the exquisite delight of seeking upon your pale face for the signs of the heart's trepidation you would vainly look for in me, and that too, with my pistol covering your brain, and my finger pressing on the trigger. Why have you yourself fixed upon these six fatal paces? Did you think, perhaps, that your small capacity could outwit mine, and that I would expose my head to your felon ball without especial care that you run the same danger? We shall cast lots my friend! and then—then—but what if he should have the better chance? if my star should at last desert me? and it is not impossible, for it has served me so long and faithfully in all my wishes, it must set at last. Wherefore, too, the fatal presentiment that I have lately felt—that this weak fool and myself impinge fatally—fool though he be, is he my destiny? If I am to die, I *must* die! the loss to the world will not be great; the world and I are mutually tired of each other. The world has little to afford me now, but years of regret and death. Who knows, too, what misery may be in store for me in future?—instead of which, by getting shot now—pshaw! I am nervous this morning—I, too, who have the courage to gape in a ball-room.

I cannot help asking myself the following questions:—Why have I lived? for what purpose was I born; if I am to perish now? And yet I have existed, and undoubtedly I have an important destiny, because I feel within myself an immense and unconquerable power for “something.” But alas! I have trusted to the empty and fatal guidance of faithless passions. I came forth from the encounter with such passions hard and cold as ice, but I had lost for ever the energy for exertion and honourable distinction, the greatest virtues in life. I had unhappily ceased to love and respect my species, and their blame and their suffrages are alike indifferent to me. How often, too, have I not served

since as the hammer in the hands of fate, like an avenging Nemesis, crushing and destroying her victims in their shock against me, often without ill-feeling towards them, always without regret. My love brought no happiness to any one, not even to its transitory object, because I could never make the full sacrifice of my pride to those I loved. I always entertained the *arrière pensée*, have loved for myself, for my own gratification; I was alone anxious, and I cannot conceal from myself that I have been miserably selfish, only in my regard to satisfy the vague cravings of my own heart. The devotion of tenderness, its joys, its sorrows, have been wasted prodigally upon me, and yet I could never find the one being whom I could *really* love, as I feel that, notwithstanding all, I am capable of loving; but unhappily my ideal standard was so high, that I have never found the being yet that equalled it. I have at times given way to the imagination, but I have ever awakened from dream after dream to find that my heart was still doomed to beat alone and unmated, like a famished beggar, who, in his hungry sleep, beholds before him the most choice dishes and sparkling wines, intoxicating himself with the sight and perfumes of the gifts of his imagination till he awakens, as I have so often done, when the imagination becomes exhausted—but the one *need* and the despair not only remain with him, but have redoubled all their force.

Perhaps I may die to-morrow!—and not a being will live in the world who understood me. Some people believe me worse, and how many again have thought me better, than I really am! And supposing I fall by the bullet of this fool, one-half of the world will say that beneath the veil of eccentricity and waywardness that shadowed my character, that I was in reality, and taking my actions into consideration, not much worse than my neighbours; while the others will declare that my peculiarities were but a cloak to screen my heartless and unmitigated villany

from public exposure. Both these opinions—though each possessing something of a tinge of truth—would be of themselves false: and knowing all this, is it worth while living? It is now some time, by the way, since I have been existing out of pure curiosity—awaiting the advent of something new—what a lugubrious farce it all is!—how inconceivably absurd to——! however, a few hours will settle it all.—Wild, I see, must soon arrive.

* * * * *

It is now nearly two months since I have been stationed, for my sins, in the fortress of N——. My excellent old friend, the commandant, Sohtabz-Capitan Sergey Antonovitch Sorokin, who is paramount here, and with whom I do what I please, is away from the garrison on duty. I am alone; sitting before an open window; grey clouds are covering the mighty Caucasian mountains down to their very feet; the sun shines with difficulty through the clouds, and appears like a yellow spot. It is cold and cheerless; the stormy wind is raging without, and shakes the shutters to and fro with a disagreeable and nervous sound. I feel dull. I shall, I think, and by way of something to do, continue my erratic memoranda, which have now been for some time interrupted by so many strange occurrences.

In reading over the last page of my journal, I cannot help smiling at its tenor! I was, I find, prepared to die, and yet my destiny willed it otherwise; the hour-glass of my being has not yet run down, and I feel now, on the contrary, as if in defiance of *ennui*, climate, and Tscherkessian rifles, I was fated to live for a long while, and, perhaps, to some purpose, too.

How distinct and vividly the past presents itself at this moment to my recollection! I have not even forgotten the slightest incident of that fatal morning!

I recollect that I had passed a sleepless and watchful night, before the advent of the day on which I was destined to encounter

Frantovskoi. I had not closed my eyes for a single moment, I was restless and perturbed; I could do nothing for a continuance, a secret uneasiness at once tormented and humiliated me. I had been walking for upwards of an hour up and down my rooms; I threw myself into a fauteuil and opened a volume of Walter Scott, translated into French, which was lying before me on the table: it was "The Heart of Mid-Lothian." I began to read it with forced attention, but I soon lost myself again in my reflections; my mind was all on fire, and seemed at that time to possess a strange lever-like power, that could at once arrest the past and grasp at the future. Faces of long-forgotten people seemed peering at me from the distant corners of my rooms; ideas and recollections of things the most irrelevant were passing at galloping speed through my brain. My nervous system was evidently for the time deranged.

At last the wished-for dawn began to appear, and the excitement I was suffering to abate. I opened the window, and inhaled the fresh mountain air, and I then with some curiosity proceeded to examine myself in the looking-glass: a deadly pallor covered my face, the consequence of the sleepless and fearful night I had passed; but my eyes, though surrounded with a dark and livid halo, were shining coldly and fiercely with the old steel-like gleam that had so often been remarked when my mind was fully bent upon a stern and desperate intent. It gave me confidence again in myself and I felt more satisfied.

I had over night given instructions to my servants to have the horses in readiness, and I took the advantage of their being at the door to ride to one of the chalybeate springs outside the town, for the purpose of a bath. Plunging into the cold mineral water, I began soon to feel its refreshing and invigorating power, renovating my entire moral and physical strength. I left the water fresh and lively, as if prepared to enter a ball-room. After

this don't let metaphysicians inform me that the soul has no connection with the body !

On my return to my quarters I found "Doctor Wild" already waiting for me. He wore a pair of grey overalls, an *archalouck*,* and a Tscherkeasian fur cap. I could not help laughing—though my mind was occupied with far more serious matter—on looking at his comical little figure; his head almost hidden beneath an enormous fur cap: he certainly does not possess a martial appearance, and his wrinkled countenance on that particular morning looked longer, perhaps, than usual.

"What is the matter with you, doctor?" said I to him. "Have you not more than a thousand times escorted your unhappy patients to the verge of yonder future world of yours, and with the greatest indifference? Just be good enough to imagine that I have the yellow fever, typhus, the gout in the stomach, or any other deadly ailment, that I may recover or that I may very probably die of it; both instances are admissible and in the order of things. Have the kindness, then, to look upon me as a patient, suffering from a malady with which you are not perfectly familiar yet, and then your professional curiosity to discover its every feature will be excited to the highest degree; you have also ample opportunity of making a few important physiological observations upon human nature. This is not so absurd as it would seem at first sight either, for the anticipation of an immediate death may, I think, be almost classed with a positive illness."

This novel idea convinced the doctor most satisfactorily, and he became more cheerful.

We mounted our horses. Wild grasped the unaccustomed reins with both his hands, and we galloped off. The walls of the fortress were soon behind us; we passed through the village

* A frock-coat made of Persian cashmere.

beyond, and found ourselves upon the mountain road, which was here winding its way through thick shrubs and high grass, and plentifully intersected with noisy brooks, as is the whole face of the country in these regions; many of them are deep and possess strong currents. We had to cross them at every instant, to the no small annoyance and dismay of little Wild, whose steed had an irrepressible fancy for stopping in the middle of the water.

I never remember to have witnessed a morning so fresh, so lovely, and so cheerful, as that eventful one. The sun just began to show its broad disc over the green heights, and the mingling of its first warm rays with the dying shadows of the night, together with the strange dreamy effect produced by this singular atmospheric admixture, spread over all my senses an incomprehensible languor. In the ravines which we were passing the dawn of the struggling day had not as yet penetrated; the rays of morning had as yet gilded only the tops of the shrubs, hanging from both sides, over our heads; the thick and flowering bushes, growing on the steep sides of the ravine on each side of us, were, at every gust of the morning breeze, relieved of their burden of dew, and covered both of us with a shower of liquid diamonds. I recollect—and it was strange, that that morning, more, perhaps, than ever before—I felt that in my heart I cherished and venerated nature. I found myself looking with child-like admiration upon each dew-drop that trembled upon the broad leaves of the wild vines that climbed in all directions in their tangled beauty around me, reflecting back like gems the early rays of the sun—my eyes were striving eagerly to penetrate the dim horizon, where the view, mingling with the retreating mists of night, became vague and indistinct, until the rocks that crested the far hills in the distance appeared purple and impalpable, like the creations of a

delicious dream. The feelings that then oppressed me so pleasingly were certainly strangely at variance with the errand of death to which I was then proceeding.

We rode on together quietly, and in silence.

"Have you made your will, Prince Zadonskoi?" demanded Wild suddenly of me.

"No."

"But if you are killed?"

"My heirs, believe me, will know how to find their prize, sir," I responded.

"And you really have not one friend to whom you would wish to send an adieu, or a memento?" continued the doctor, as he wrung my hand with warmth. "My dear Zadonskoi," said he, "you are not half such a charlatan as I believed you to be, and you will howl in this world and the next without sympathy; but tell me—is there not *one* woman in the world, *loup garrou* as you have been among them, to whom you would wish to send some token of remembrance?"

"If you will, doctor," said I to him, "I will open my heart to you. I must premise that, mentally, I am prematurely old, as I have before told you. I have, I fear, though still young, long passed the happy age when a man dies pronouncing the dulcet name of a beloved object, or by his very last desire sends a lock of perfumed or unperfumed hair to her or to his *friend*. In presence of an approaching death, I look at the world, if not more cynically, more sternly certainly, than ever; its passions and sorrows appear to me more puerile; its pleasures more empty. I look but with greater disgust at the past, and those whom I knew, and the worldly relations that brought me into connection with them. I look upon almost all with a species of moral antagonism at this moment. I think of myself, too, and my possible fate, within the next quarter of an hour,

with such sovereign indifference, that I can hardly be supposed to feel much interest in others; besides, were I the most amiable character in the world, instead of being, as I have ever been, unloving and unloved, I should be forgotten in a day or two, comparatively. As for the few women who may have a regard for me, they would weep for a week, perhaps, on hearing of my death: later, they might even sentimentalise over it to appear interesting, or to pique a rival, till he won them, when they would be just as likely to laugh at, or even depreciate, my memory, while embracing the fortunate lover to prove their new devotion, or to calm his jealousy. God bless them! I know them well! Amidst the storms and excitements of life I have succeeded in saving a few opinions, but not one tender feeling. I have long since taught myself to live—not with the heart, but with the head—though I have not hitherto lived to much purpose. I have long learned to measure, consider, and dissect my own passions and actions with the severest scrutiny, but without the slightest sympathy. My philosophy is of a strange kind, doctor; if the paradox were not too absurd, I would explain it as a kind of Epicurean stoicism of my own invention. I am a strange combination, too. There are two separate beings, as it were, that form the strange compound of humanity I hail as myself: the one is the living erring man, in the full sense of the word; the other is the Frankenstein being of my own creation, that looks on and watches his every thought, feeling, and action, with jealous watchfulness. The first may, perhaps, within a quarter of an hour, bid you, my dear doctor, and the world, a long farewell; and the second, the other. But, by the way, look here, doctor. Do you not perceive three persons on the hill on the right? Just so; I must postpone my revelations and disquisitions *sine die*, for there are unquestionably our adversaries."

At the foot of the rock on which I had first caught sight of the persons I have mentioned, three horses were picketted to the branches of some stunted trees. We fastened our own animals close to them, and proceeded ourselves by a narrow and winding path, that led along the sides of the cliff, to a sort of natural terrace towards its summit: we there found Frantovskoi, the captain of dragoons, and another, who were awaiting us. The last-named individual, whom I had but once met before, was addressed by Frantovskoi by his Christian names, as "Ivan Ivanovitch," but his family name I did not catch, and I have not taken the trouble since to ascertain it. He was a subaltern of artillery, attached to the garrison.

"We have been waiting for you some time, gentlemen," said the bold dragoon, with a somewhat supercilious smile.

I produced my watch, and presented it to him with a careless bow. He apologised; and after again consulting his own, he admitted that he feared it was in advance.

A moment or so of oppressive silence followed, which was interrupted by little Wild, who thus addressed himself to the two seconds of Frantovskoi:

"It appears to me," said he, "that both these wise persons being ready to cut each other's throats, and thus obviously inclined to pay all due tribute to the world's tomfoolery—which world is, of course, exceedingly grateful to them for their attention—still it appears to me, gentlemen, that we might even now have an explanation, and terminate the affair *à l'amiable*, and by that means we may perhaps save one, if not two, invaluable lives for the fools' muster-roll of society."

Our friend was privileged. A smile only followed this philanthropic sally.

"I have no earthly objection," said I.

The dragoon here exchanged a meaning glance with Fran-

tovskoi; and he, fancying from the doctor's suggestion, that it was possible, perhaps, that I felt some little secret trepidation, immediately assumed an air of marked determination, although, up to this time, I had remarked that his face had been tinged with a dark and unwholesome pallor. It was the first time that our eyes had met since my arrival; but I could trace in his glance, nevertheless, a certain uneasiness, betraying a strong inward agitation.

"Explain yourself, sir," said he, coldly; "and all that is possible for me to grant you, you may rely upon."

"These, then, are my conditions, Lieutenant Frantovskoi," said I. "You must publicly retract your base calumny and apologise: the latter immediately to ME; the former condition no later than this morning, and to the whole town."

"Sir, I am astonished at the insolence of the suggestion!" he answered.

"What else could I propose to you, Lieutenant Frantovskoi?" I demanded.

"We shall fight then."

I shrugged my shoulders, and simply uttered the monosyllable "*Soit*;" and then added, after a moment, "as you like; but you will observe that but one of us must leave this place alive."

"Then, I sincerely hope, it will be you, Prince Zadonskoi!"

"And I am most perfectly convinced of the contrary."

He was disconcerted: he crimsoned to his temples; turned pale and then laughed; but it was almost hysterically.

The dragoon took him by the arm and led him aside; they whispered together for some time. I was in an unusually good temper for me; but these delays began to irritate me, and I felt the old bilious devilment stealing through my veins.

Wild here approached me with a serious air.

"Zadonskoi," said he, in accents of unfeigned alarm, "you surely have forgotten all about those little private arrangements I told you I had every reason to suspect, and that I warned you of? I hardly know how to load a pistol myself; but in this case—You are certainly a strange fellow. Tell them at once that you guess their villanous intentions, and they will not dare to—What the devil! do you really mean to be shot at like a woodcock?"

"Tranquillise yourself, doctor, and have patience," said I; "I shall arrange matters, so that they shall have but little advantage to boast of. Give them just time to finish their conversation."

The doctor would have answered me, but I interrupted him.

"Gentlemen, this begins to grow wearisome," I exclaimed, loudly: "if we are to fight, let us begin at once; you had full time to parley yesterday, and we did not come here to converse on the beauties of nature, or upon things in general."

"We are ready," replied the dragoon. "Take your positions, gentlemen! Doctor, will you be kind enough to measure six paces?"

"To your places, gentlemen!" repeated Ivan Ivanovitch, in exact imitation, as usual, of the valiant dragoon who had just spoken.

"Pardon me the interruption," said I, "if I venture another suggestion. As we are about to fight '*à la mort*,' I consider it to be our duty to ourselves and to our friends, that we do so as secretly as possible; we must not involve our seconds in any unpleasant consequences. Do you agree with me on this point, gentlemen?"

"Your observations are just, Zadonskoi," said the little doctor; "but to what do they apply?—of course——"

"Very well then," I continued, "this would be my plan.

Do you perceive, gentlemen, yonder high and overhanging rock above here? On its summit there is, I recollect, a narrow plateau; from that towering height to the bottom of the precipice below it, I think I may venture to say, the distance cannot be less than a hundred and fifty feet; the bottom of the abyss is studded with sharp and rugged crags: the wretch who fell among them from such an elevation would scarcely leave a vestige of shattered humanity behind him to mark his fall. We will each of us take our stand at the extreme verge of the plateau, and on the very edge of the precipice. By this simple means, a vast deal of trouble will be saved, as the merest hit will be mortal. I trust that you cannot but find this in accordance with your wishes, since you have yourselves fixed upon the fatal distance of six paces. He who is wounded, no matter how slightly, according to my arrangement, will inevitably reel over the precipice, fall to the bottom, and be cut, shattered, and smashed to atoms on the rocks beneath. Doctor Wild will have the kindness to extract the ball should any identity still remain traceable in the crushed and lacerated corpse, and thus it will be easy to attribute the death to accident, or to an unlucky leap or venture among the elevations above. And we will now, if you please, throw up a golden imperial for the first shot, for I must inform you on second thoughts that this is the sole and only condition on which I shall go on with the affair."

"Your plan certainly boasts of some little originality, Prince Zadonskoi; however, as you please," said the bold dragoon, lookingly significantly at the time at Frantovskoi, who bowed in assent. But his face was changing every moment; it was a perfect panorama of expressions. I had placed him in a difficult position, for I now had no doubt of their murderous intentions towards me. Fighting under ordinary conditions, he could have purposely missed or wounded me slightly, and have thus satisfied

his revengeful feeling, without particularly committing himself; but now he would be compelled to fire in the air—to assassinate me in cold blood before his friends, like a dastard, or to abandon his base design and place himself in equal peril with myself. In that moment I certainly did not envy him the embarrassment in which I had placed him. He took the captain of cuirassiers aside, and began another and a very animated conversation; I could plainly perceive how his livid lips were trembling; I could not, of course know what passed; but the heavy dragoon smiled at him contemptuously as he turned away.

“You are a fool!” said he, audibly, to Frantovskoi, “you understand nothing of the matter; besides it is now in my hands. Let us proceed, gentlemen!”

“It is time we should, indeed,” observed the artillery man, pointedly, and as usual like an echo.

A narrow footpath led upwards from our place of rendezvous, amidst shrubs, to the road, and from thence upwards towards the fatal plateau I had indicated; fragments of loose rock formed the steps of this rugged and natural ladder up the face of the mountain, which we now began to climb with difficulty, holding and clinging by the shrubs that almost choked our way. Frantovskoi led the van of our little party, followed by his two seconds, whilst the doctor and I brought up the rear.

We paused for a moment for breath.

“You surprise me, Zadonskoi,” said little Wild, who took an opportunity of addressing me, while pressing my hand. “Allow me to feel your pulse! Oh! ah! just so, rather feverish—but your face betrays nothing—absolutely nothing! Your eyes have a cold strange expression in them—that will do very well.”

We were now approaching the summit, and the rocks by which we had clung and scrambled in our upward course became

smaller and looser; they began to roll down from beneath our feet, and our progress became every moment more difficult. "What's that?" Frantovskoi had slipped; the shrubs to which he had clung had broken or given way, and he would have inevitably rolled down, and perhaps to the bottom, if his seconds had not held him up, and placed him again on his feet.

"Take care, Frantovskoi," shouted I to him: "do not fall to the bottom so soon; it is a bad omen; remember Julius Cæsar!"
Cave quos ipse Deus notavit!

We soon arrived at the top of the beetling cliff; the small platform was covered with wet gravel, as if destined to become the arena of our impending drama. Around, lost in the distance, among the golden clouds of the morning, were innumerable mountain crests, like islands rising from a golden sea, for their bases were shrouded in the rolling glowing mists, and the mighty Yelborouss rose in the south in a vast white mass, while all around and below us the most fantastic clouds were floating in chaotic confusion, drifting from the east. The scene was so superbly beautiful—so intensely, surpassingly beautiful—that even at that moment I could not but admire the remarkable beauty of these singular effects. I proceeded to the brink of the plateau, and threw a hasty glance into the abyss; my head nearly turned; below all seemed dark, gloomy, and cold as the grave; at the bottom the mists still lingered; and from its heaving and wreathing bosom I could see the sharp and ragged tusks of the rocks below, heaped together by time and tempests, and which seemed to me as if awaiting their prey.

The plateau upon which we were to fight was nearly in the form of an equilateral triangle. From its further projecting angle six paces were accurately measured, and it was agreed that he who should first have to meet the fire of his adversary should place himself on the extreme verge of the precipice, with

his back towards the abyss: should he remain unhurt his antagonist was in turn to take his place.

I was determined to give Frantovskoi every advantage; I wanted still to try him. Had his heart been capable of but a spark of generosity, and had he but evinced it, everything would have terminated favourably for us both, even at the eleventh hour; but it was fated differently—the constitutional vanity and weakness of his character were, it seems, to the last to rule his actions. I was temperate, I admit—but at this lapse of time I must own that there was a devilish jesuitism in it—I had an object. I wished to secure to myself *the right not to spare him*, when fate should have placed him in my hands; and my unfailing premonitions told me that such would infallibly be the case, notwithstanding the assassin-like conspiracy and the terrible odds they had prepared against me.

“Come, we are losing time; throw up a coin, doctor!” said the dragoon.

The doctor produced an imperial from his pocket, and it flew glittering in the air.

“Imperial!” shouted Frantovskoi, quickly, in the short startled tone of a man brought suddenly to himself by a friendly push.

“Eagle!” I exclaimed.

The coin flew through the early sunlight, and fell ringing on the ground; all rushed forward towards it, but made way for me as I came up more deliberately.

“You are fortunate, sir,” I observed, coldly; “you have won the first shot! But now mark me distinctly, Lieutenant Frantovskoi, if you fail to kill me, I shall not spare you—and I rarely miss—I will slay you, I give you my most sacred word of honour, and by the God that lives!”

He was confused and crimsoned to the temples; he was ashamed to murder a defenceless man; I had all this time looked

him sternly and coldly in the face ; for a moment I fancied that he would have thrown himself at my feet—would have admitted all, and would have asked my pardon : but how could he confess to so base a premeditation ? One chance, however, was left to him—to fire in the air, and so have escaped for a time from the difficulty by a simulation of magnanimity. I was confident that he would have acted thus. One reason only could prevent him from doing so : the idea that I would have insisted on a second shot.

“Now, now, Zadonskoi !” said the doctor to me, in whispered but excited accents, pulling me nervously by the sleeve, “if you don’t speak now—if you don’t tell them that we know their intentions you are lost. Look there, they are already loading the pistols. By heavens, Zadonskoi, if you don’t speak, I shall —why —”

“Not for all the world, doctor,” I replied, retaining him firmly, almost indeed by main force, by his arm : “you will spoil all ; besides you gave me your word of honour not to interfere in any way. What is it to you after all ? Perhaps it is my wish to be shot. Every man has his particular fancy and his particular method of carrying it out.”

He looked at me for a moment in surprise.

“Oh ! that is a different affair,” he answered ; “but do not accuse me of it in the next world.”

The captain of dragoons had by this time loaded the pistols, he presented one of them to Frantovskoi, with a smile of peculiar meaning, and a hurried whisper ; the other he handed to to me, with a stiff bow.

I proceeded to take my position on the verge of the precipice, resting strongly, however, with my left foot upon a stone that was firmly imbedded in the soil, and bending a little forward, so that if but slightly wounded, I might possibly escape overbalancing and falling backwards into the chasm.

Frantovskoi stood opposite to me, *but I remarked that his eyes refused to meet mine*; at the given signal he began slowly to raise his arm. An almost imperceptible tremor shook his whole frame. He pointed his weapon at my head.

I fancied that I could see down the barrel, and an inexpressible fury awoke within me. I could hardly resist rushing forward—wrenching the pistol from his hand, and battering in his head with the butt-end of it.

Suddenly, to my surprise, he lowered the muzzle of his weapon, and, pale as death, he turned round towards his seconds.

“I cannot,” said he, in a faint and almost inaudible voice.

“Coward!” exclaimed the captain of dragoons.

“Coward!” re-echoed the artilleryman, Ivan Ivanovitch.

Again he turned upon me—the expression of his face I shall never forget—the deadly tube was once more presented: *but he could not meet my eye*, and it is to that, I believe, I am indebted for my life.

The shot was fired—the ball merely grazed my knee. Involuntarily I made a few steps in advance to escape, instinctively, from the abyss behind me.

“Well, brother* Frantovskoi, you are unfortunate in losing your hit!” said the captain; “it is your turn now to stand your ground! Embrace me first; we may perhaps not have another opportunity!” They embraced one another; the precious captain, I perceived, was compelled to bite his lips to repress the smile upon them. The matter will become rather more serious in a few minutes, I thought. “Keep up your spirits,” added he, looking with peculiar meaning at Frantovskoi; “all is nonsense in this world. Nature is a charlatan, fortune a turncoat, and life not worth a copeck.”

* A familiar idiom peculiar to the Russian language.

After this tragical piece of bathos, pronounced with suitable emphasis, he resumed his place ; Ivan Ivanovitch, with tears in his eyes—by the way, I have never discovered if he was in the secret of the murderous cabal against me ;—most probably he was ; however, he imitated the valedictory embrace of the dragoon ; and now Frantovskoi was at last standing alone before me. I, even to this day, cannot account to myself for the sensation which so strongly excited me then : it was a mixture of offended pride, savage scorn, and unalloyed hatred, which rose boiling within me at the idea, that this very man, who, a few minutes ago, had shown signs of undisguised pusillanimity, had now the assurance to look with an unfeigned indifference, amounting even to bravado, in my face, now that he was perfectly aware that he was not exposed to the slightest danger—for he knew well that the weapon that had been given to me was loaded but with powder and paper,—while some few minutes since his intention had been to kill me like a dog, and in cold blood, for a more dangerous wound than the one his trembling hand permitted him to give me would have tumbled me from the rock into the depths of the precipice below.

For a few moments I looked him attentively in the face, trying to discover the slightest perceptible trace of compunction, but, it seemed to me, on the contrary, as though he was striving to repress a smile.

“I would advise you, Frantovskoi, to pray to your God before you die,” said I to him solemnly.

“Pray do not trouble yourself more about my salvation, than your own, it would really be invidious,” he added ironically. “If I may presume to ask you a favour, indeed, it would be simply that you lose no further time.”

“You refuse, then, to retract your slanders, sir ? and you refuse to apologise ? Reflect seriously, Lieutenant Fran-

tovskoi; does your conscience *still* whisper nothing to you?"

"Sir!" exclaimed the valiant cuirassier loudly and angrily, "you are not here to preach: allow me to remind you that too much time has already been lost. Let us finish as soon as possible; some one might pass, and we might be seen."

"Yes, sir! we really cannot be detained here all the morning," echoed again Ivan Ivanovitch.

"Very well, then, gentlemen! Doctor Wild, will you come here, if you please?"

The doctor came up to me, Poor little doctor! he looked almost paler in his secret sympathy for me—for he would not have admitted it for the world—than Frantovskoi ten minutes before.

I now pronounced the following words, with a slow and marked intonation, and in a clear, loud, and solemn voice, which evidently succeeded, as I had intended, in causing an effect upon the knot of miscreants I was addressing—though they were far from suspecting, when I commenced, what was the object of my speech:—

"Doctor Wild, *these gentlemen*, perhaps, and of course in a moment of pre-occupation, may possibly have forgotten to put a ball in my pistol: I pray you to take the trouble to unload it, and to load it again,—and you will be particularly careful in the latter arrangement, if you please!"

"It cannot be, sir," shouted the captain: "it is impossible! I loaded both the pistols myself. Should the ball of your weapon have fallen out, which cannot possibly have taken place, it is not our fault! But you have not the right to load again—no right whatever—it is totally against every rule; I shall not suffer it."

"It is absolutely against every rule," exclaimed the artillery-

man, Ivan Ivanovitch, who was a kind of toady to the bold dragoon, whose every word and opinion he echoed, and with whom he agreed, in every case, like an adjective.

"Very well, sir!" replied I to the dragoon captain: "if it is thus, you shall fight me afterwards, and upon the same conditions."

He became slightly confused.

Frantovskoi stood still in the same place, but with his head now bent upon his breast, stricken down, desponding, and degraded.

"Leave them," said he at last, in a choking voice, to his excited second, who was on the point of almost wrenching the pistol from the hands of the doctor by force; "leave them the pistols—my fate is sealed—you well know they have the right."

The glances and signals of the captain were unavailing. Frantovskoi did not even take notice of them; his eyes were still rivetted to the ground.

Meanwhile the doctor had loaded the pistol, and handed it to me.

On seeing this, the captain spat and stamped with his foot upon the ground in a style which the common troopers in our service call *soldatski à la Suvaroff*, and which is considered strongly indicative of slight and disgust. "You are a fool, brother," said he, "an enormous fool! If you had put trust in me so far, why not have relied upon me to the end? You will get your score, sir! die like a fly!" and he repeated this elegant gesture of contempt, but added, with a bow to me: "Nevertheless, sir, it is entirely against the rules."

"Frantovskoi!" said I, "it is *yet* time; retract your falsehood, and admit that you never saw me issue from the windows of the innocent lady, who unhappily preferred me to yourself,

and I will forgive you all. You did not succeed in your project of mystifying me first, and of murdering me afterwards; retract, my *amour-propre* is satisfied; remember, we were once friends."

His face flushed, his eyes flashed fire—he looked at that moment like a man.

"Fire!" replied he. "I now despise *myself* as much as I hate you. Fire, or I shall rush upon you, and throw you from the precipice. The world is now too small to hold us both."

I shot him!

When the smoke had dispersed, Frantovskoi was no longer on the plateau.

A slight cloud of dust was alone to be seen, yet lingering on the crumbled verge of the precipice. One involuntary exclamation of stifled horror arose from the assistants of this terrible denouement.

"*Finita la comedia!*" said I almost unconsciously, turning towards the doctor.

He made me no answer, but remained horror-struck, as if rivetted to the spot where the unhappy man had so lately stood before us, in all the plenitude of his youth and strength, now struck out for ever from the muster-roll of life—gone from among us—his existence already a matter of past history—dead—gone!

I shrugged my shoulders and bowed gravely to the seconds of *the late* Frantovskoi.

We descended the narrow footpath, if possible, with greater difficulty than we had ascended it. When almost at the bottom, I was attracted by a strange shadow that the sun had thrown before us. I have omitted to mention that I was the foremost of the party. I turned round, and perceived, on the sharp

spur of a projecting crag, the mutilated and unrecognisable remains of Frantovskoi; except for the tatters of the undress uniform that still clung to him, it would have been impossible to have done so. I turned my eyes away, and felt sick and dizzy.

I disengaged my horse, mounted into the saddle, and rode slowly towards the town. My heart seemed as if overwhelmed with a hundredweight of lead. The sun appeared to me to be covered with a veil; its rays did not seem to touch me, or to warm me.

I altered my mind, however, and when upon the very outskirts of Kislovodsk, I turned to the right, towards the mountains again. The sight of a human being would at that moment have been oppressive to me. I felt the necessity of being alone, I threw my reins loosely on the neck of my horse, inclined my head upon my breast, and rode a long time, I know not how long, lost in sad and painful self-communion, and without any definite object in view, until, at last, I found myself upon a wild road, with which I was totally unacquainted; the sun was already sinking below the horizon when I re-entered Kislovodsk, much fatigued in body and mind, and upon a jaded and exhausted horse.

My servant told me that Wild had called several times, and had left two notes. The one I found was in his own handwriting, the other was from Olga.

The first I opened was the doctor's missive; its contents were couched in the following words:—

“All has been arranged as satisfactorily as was possible under the circumstances. It was brought into the town in its mutilated state: the ball was previously extracted from the breast. All attribute the sudden death to an unfortunate accident; the commandant of the garrison only, who undoubtedly must have had a suspicion of your difference with ———, shook his head ominously, but as yet has said nothing. There are

no proofs whatever. Fear nothing. You may sleep at ease, if possible. Fare you well."

It was a considerable time before I could open the second billet—it was Olga's. What could she wish to say to me? An evil presentiment weighed heavily upon my heart as I broke the seal.

That letter is at this moment before me, each word of which is deeply impressed upon my memory :—

"I write to you, Zadonskoi, in the full conviction that in this world we shall never meet again. A few years since, and in parting with you and all I then held dear, I thought the same; but Heaven willed it that I should be proved a second time. This second trial was beyond my strength; my feeble heart yielded to its fate, and submitted again to the familiar voice that was its life's talisman. Do not condemn me; despise me not for this weakness. This letter is both a last adieu and also, in this last moment of agony, a confession. I cannot refrain from telling you of all my heart has suffered, and always in secret, since we first met, and since it first bowed to its fatal destiny. I will not accuse you, Zadonskoi; you have but acted towards me as every other man palled like yourself with the world's successes would have done. You even loved me, perhaps—after a fashion—as much as you are capable of the sentiment; that is, you *suffered* me, and you became habituated to me as your property—as a thing that appertained to you—that was yours, body and soul, as a source of gratified vanity, pleasure, pain, trouble, and even anxiety; for, without these phases in the ever-changing kaleidoscope of life, existence itself would become *ennui*, and unbearable in its monotony. To a certain degree, I understood this from the beginning; and even now, from your unhappy character, I know few of God's erring creatures who are more to be pitied than yourself. But you were unhappy, and I sacrificed myself in the cherished hope that the day would at last arrive when you could have appreciated my sacrifice, and perhaps have understood the deep devotion—the dream of a life—that had occasioned it. Many years have rolled by since then. I have at last penetrated the almost inscrutable mystery of your insentient heart, and I have long been convinced that I then nourished hopes as futile as they were sanguine. I have suffered much, Zadonskoi—much from you, for you, and through you; and yet my unfailing, unceasing love has never flagged for a moment through all those weary years. I could not have done otherwise, for that love had become a portion of my being—a part of my very

soul : it has shaded and darkened my young existence. Fedor, how often have I prayed that it could have extinguished it !

"It is past now ; the last and most difficult struggle is over.

"We have parted for ever ; and yet, believe me, I shall never love another. My heart has lavished upon you all its treasures—the sad wealth of its first love—its life of pain and secret tears, and its last hopes. Loving you once as I have loved, it must even continue to the end. Even before I had formed the strange ties that circumstance and the despotic conventionalities of the world have compelled me to adopt, the flatteries and attentions of the men who swarmed around me in society but aroused my contempt or disgust, or simply indifference. It was not because you were handsome—more gifted and brilliant than they ; but there was in you a something peculiar—a something original of your own—a waywardness—an attractive and repulsive pride—a mystery—a mystery in your inexplicable harshness, bitterness, almost approaching to ferocity, that at times made you dreaded in every circle—a mystery in the inexpressible tenderness that you could at will throw into your every tone and gesture, which was unaccountable, but which would have won a saint. There was a something in your voice—a charm—no matter what you said, that exerted an unconquerable ascendancy over me. No one could be more seducingly amiable than yourself ; with no one was fascination more dangerous—with no one was utter wickedness so attractive. No eyes could promise more happiness to the being upon whom they beamed tenderly, though those glances were as evanescent as they were false. No one knew better how to derive the greatest advantage from position and accomplishments than yourself ; and, nevertheless, no one could have been more wretched. I, perhaps the only woman who ever truly loved you, at least in *my* sense of the word—I discovered the mystery of your character, and more latterly the secret of your life. Have I not even consoled you under its fearful influence ? and its knowledge will perish with me ; but I—I alone knew your real unhappiness, and interest and pity left me the more defenceless against your fascinations. God help me ! with all my sad experience—with all the wretchedness I have suffered from my first fault—I should, I fear, again succumb before my fate.

"I hardly know what I have written ; but I should inform you of the cause of my precipitate departure from this place ; and yet it will perhaps appear unimportant to you, because it only concerns me personally.

"This morning my husband entered my room, and spoke to me of your quarrel and your consequent duel with Frantovskoi. He evidently must have discovered my agony of heart in my countenance, because he looked at me attentively, strangely, even sternly, in the face from the first. I nearly fainted at the idea that it was to-day that you were to meet your antagonist, and that I, poor, wretched, guilty woman, was the

cause of all. I thought I should have lost my senses; but now I have partially recovered, since I have learned that you are still living and well. You have been seen since this terrible *rencontre*: it could not but have been thus. I have ever felt this in your former dangers: it is impossible that you should die without me; it cannot be. *He* paced the room hurriedly for some considerable time; but I can tell you nothing, for I hardly know what passed between us: it was a fearful scene, and its recollection is still like the vague and troubled impression of a nightmare. I know not what he said to me, how the fatal subject commenced, how it proceeded, or how it terminated; but one thing is certain—my mind must have wandered, for I told him that I loved you. Of what followed I know nothing; but at its close—and it is indelibly engraved upon my memory—the words seem even now hissing in my ears—he—and conscience makes its appalling comment—he cast a word of infamy upon me, and left the room. I heard him give orders in speechless stupefaction for our immediate departure. It is now nearly three hours since, and I have been sitting at the window, and anxiously awaiting your return—if only to see you *once* more. But at least you are alive—you are unhurt. Heavens! *am* I to see you again? They tell me the carriage is nearly ready. Fedor, come to me. O God! the carriage is at the door. Farewell, farewell! I am—but what does it matter now? If I could only hope—Fedor, do not forget me, I entreat you. Love me—at least my memory. No, even that were vain now. Farewell!—again farewell! They are coming: I must hide my letter.

“Is it not true that you do not love Anastasia? No; you will not marry her—you for whom I have sacrificed all of earth—and, oh! perhaps, how much of heaven! Listen, Zadonskoi—do not marry her—any one else but her—I pray, I entreat you. Zadonskoi, loved one, for you I have lost all in this world! I claim but this in return—and——”

But there was no more; she had evidently been again and definitively interrupted; the letter had been hastily closed, sealed, and sent to me as it was. I flew like a madman into the street, and again sprang upon my Tscherkessian horse, which was still being led about in order to become somewhat cool after his late severe exertion, and I galloped, *centre à terre*, towards Pjatigorsk. I relentlessly spurred on my weary steed, who, all panting and foaming beneath me, was now flying like lightning along the stony road.

The sun was already sinking behind some sombre and

heavy clouds which were reposing upon the lofty crests of the mountains in the west. The rocky causeway grew dark and uncertain; the swollen currents of the numerous streams that intersected the road were monotonously flowing over their pebbly beds. I increased, if possible, my headlong pace, whilst almost losing breath with impatience. The idea of missing her, perhaps, at Pjatigorsk, was like the stroke of a poignard in my heart. I little guessed till then how dear she was to me. How strange that we know not the value of a treasure until we are about to lose it for ever! 'But for one instant, only *one*, to see her once more, to hear her voice, to press her hand, ere I bade her farewell for ever! I shouted, swore, almost wept, laughed hysterically—no, never could I express the wild excitement, the despair that nearly maddened me! At the thought of losing her for ever thus, that weak, almost slighted, and erring woman became a peerless treasure to my heart, more precious than life, honour, and happiness! Heaven alone knows the strange and mad creations which traversed my mind during the period of that mad ride; and all the time I was still speeding along the road, and mercilessly urging on my reeling horse; but I soon began to hear the gasping and laboured panting of the creature; he had already twice stumbled on the even path, and but for the practised hand that bore him up, he must have fallen, perhaps never to rise again. I was then but six wersts from Esentoukoff, a Cossack station, where I could have exchanged my horse.

All would have been saved if the animal could have preserved its strength but for a quarter of an hour longer; but suddenly, just at the ravine where the road leads between the mountains, and at the deepest part of the gorge, my horse stopped short suddenly, staggered for a moment, breathed heavily, and fell forward panting to the ground. I quickly sprang from the saddle to raise him to his legs, but to no purpose—the gallant brute was

dying ; his race, and his last one, too, was run. A strange agonised sigh, as if his heart was breaking, escaped through his closed teeth. Excited by my well-known voice he strove once more to rise, but fell back helplessly ; his limbs trembled convulsively, he stretched himself out, groaned, and in a few moments my steed was no more. I found myself alone in the midst of the wild steppes—for I had lost my road—and I had now lost my last hope ; nevertheless I essayed to walk ; my feet refused obedience to my will : the unremitting excitement of that memorable day, and the sleepless night, threw me powerless to the ground amidst the wet rank grass ; and strange to say, to my own surprise, to my own disgust and shame, I began to weep like a child. I, even I, whom no human emotion had caused to shed a tear since childhood, and even early childhood—I wept. I lay for a long time unmanned and immovable on the damp ground, weeping like a craven, and not even striving to repress my weakness. I felt as though my heart would have burst ; the natural sternness of my character, my energy, my coolness (the study of my life), had vanished like the mists of the morning. I was utterly unhinged and helpless—my very judgment had deserted me ; and had any one passed at that moment he would have looked down with pity and contumely upon a thing so wretched and degraded. And to this had human folly and human passion driven and reduced me.

When the evening dew and the fresh breezes from the mountains had refreshed my throbbing and burning temples, and I had partly succeeded in collecting my ideas, I began again to reason with myself and to demand why I was striving to regain a happiness that was now unattainable, and which had never even till now been appreciated. What do I wish for ?—why should I see her once more ? Why ? Is not all at an end between us ? One last kiss, a last farewell, heart-wringing in its intensity of feeling,

in its remorse, in its regrets, would have but little increased my happiness, and it would but have been more difficult to have torn myself from a treasure, of which I had only then, in the eleventh hour, discovered the priceless worth.

I felt much relieved by my tears! I am ashamed to own it even to myself, but I have heard women speak of the same effect. However that might have been, the reiterated nervous excitement of four-and-twenty hours, a night of fevered sleeplessness, a glance for half a minute down the muzzle of a duelling-pistol, the death of a human being (however the onus had been thrust upon me), a ride of some fifty miles, a mind half maddened, and an empty stomach, might form some trivial palliation for emotion of some kind.

It is all for the better, perhaps, thought I; the new contest, in military parlance, has produced a favourable diversion within me. Weeping is evidently wholesome, too—I have made that discovery, at least; and beside, had I not murdered my favourite and most valuable charger, by slinging him along at a hand gallop for about twenty miles, when his day's work was already more than done, I should have undoubtedly been unable to have closed my eyes that second night either.

I reached Kislovodsk on foot, at between five and six o'clock in the morning. I threw myself down on my bed in utter prostration, and slept like what I was, a wretch utterly exhausted both in body and mind.

When I awoke again it was already evening, and it was dark in the streets. I sat down near the windows, which I had opened, and unfastened my *archalouk*, and the mountain breeze refreshed my fevered breast, not yet entirely relieved from the heavy trance-like sleep of sheer fatigue. In the distance, on the other side of the river, between the waving tops of the rich linden trees, which fringed its shores in their beautiful luxuriance, glimmered

already the lights, like golden stars, in the outworks of the fortress and the village.

The "doctor" came shortly afterwards to visit me. He seemed careworn and pre-occupied; his forehead, too, was more gathered up with wrinkles than ever. I observed that he did not stretch out his hand as usual to welcome me.

"Where do you come from, Wild?" I demanded.

"From the Princess Ohotnikoff," he replied; "her daughter is very ill—irritation of the nerves—etc., etc., which is French, I suppose, for having excited herself for some tomfoolery or other, of her own—or yours. But this is not the question at present: the suspicions of the commandant and the military authorities are now fully aroused; and although nothing is or perhaps can be proved against you, I should advise you to be most careful. The princess knows all—she told me herself that she is aware you fought the duel for her daughter. That amiable old gentleman, her relative and your friend, has, it seems, told her everything about it. He must have gossiped most unmercifully—like an old owl. He witnessed your collision, too, with Frantovskoi at the hotel. I merely came to apprise you of all this. Farewell! We may, perhaps, not meet again, for it is very probable that you will be sent somewhere or other *en penitence*—to the devil, perhaps, where you will be certainly more at home than here."

He stopped for a moment at the threshold; he evidently wished to press my hand; and had I evinced the slightest inclination to reciprocate the feeling he would have thrown himself round my neck; but I was hurt, and I remained cold and silent as an iceberg, and he left me. I was not yet sufficiently recovered to make allowance for his peculiarities.

Such are men! and such have I ever found them. The excellent doctor, who was as good a creature as ever breathed,

was but tinctured with the same fault. In cases such as mine they know beforehand all the disadvantages of the critical situation in which a duel places you ; they assist, excite, and encourage you, believing, or professing to believe, that circumstances compel you to the step. The affair terminates fatally : they wash their hands of the business, and look coldly upon you for the very misfortune they had done their best to promote. They are all more or less alike, even the best and the wisest, the most generous and liberal.

Early on the morning of the following day I was surprised by a visit from an orderly of the commandant, bearing a most ominous-looking document. This official communication contained instructions from our commander-in-chief for me to leave Kislovodsk within twenty-four hours for the pleasant and salubrious air of the fortress of N——, in the Upper Caucasus. The doctor, then, was right, and all was known. *N'importe*—still it was somewhat sudden.

I went out, for the first time after the duel, to pay a farewell visit to the Princess Ohotnikoff. I found the elder princess in the salon ; she appeared greatly surprised to hear my cool and indifferent replies to her animated questions. At last a most unpleasant pause ensued in our conversation, when she suddenly asked me if I had nothing of importance to tell her. I answered with a languid politeness that I was aware of nothing of sufficient interest to communicate, except that I was about to quit Kislovodsk immediately—in a few hours, indeed—and that I wished her a particularly happy journey back to Moscow.

She appeared absolutely electrified at the information. She soon recovered herself, and said, almost tartly—

“ But I have to speak to you, Prince Zadonskoi, for a few moments, and very seriously, too.”

I took a seat again silently, and with an air as *distract* as politeness would allow.

It was obvious the princess knew not where to begin. Her features were continually changing their expression and colour, particularly her nose; her fingers were drumming and playing abstractedly upon the table. I knew of course what was coming, and, except for the painfulness of the subject I felt she was about to bring forward, I should have been highly amused at the scene. At last she began in an uncertain voice:—

“Listen to me, Prince Zadonskoi—I believe you from my heart to be a gentleman in feelings and conduct.”

I bowed of course.

“I am convinced of it,” she continued, “although your proceedings lately have been rather equivocal; still I am certain that you must have had your reasons for this—excellent ones, no doubt—I do not understand them of course, but it is high time now that you should explain yourself. You have, I understand, defended my daughter nobly against a cruel calumny; you have fought for her; you have exposed your life to save her reputation. Life is all that is most dear to us here on earth; consequently, I must naturally conceive, or rather infer, that you are not indifferent to her. Do not interrupt me. I know that you will not confess to this horrible rencontre on account of the sad death of this unhappy young man (she here made the sign of the cross most devoutly). Almighty God will no doubt pardon him, and I hope you, too, most sincerely. However, this must not concern me—and I have the less right to judge of your actions—since my daughter, though she is entirely innocent, poor child, has been, nevertheless, indirectly the cause of it. She has told me all, Prince Zadonskoi,—in whom could she so well confide as in her mother?—and she has acknowledged her—her lasting gratitude towards you, and—and—perhaps, her—her regard for you——

(here this excellent matron sighed deeply); but she suffers from severe indisposition; and I am afraid, indeed it is anything but a slight illness; she will not confess to it; the sweet child is in a state of acute mental suffering, but I am convinced, Monsieur Zadonskoi,—indeed I know you to be the cause of it. Hear me: you may, perhaps, imagine that I am anxious for a lofty title, or an enormous fortune,—pray, be undeceived: I am only anxious, I entreat you to believe, to see the happiness of my only child assured. Your present position in the service is not as brilliant, certainly, as we could wish, but it must improve: you are yourself titled, of a noble and wealthy family, and, above all, my daughter loves you;—her accomplishments, her character, her beauty, and her gentle innocence are such as should render her future husband happy and proud of her. I am rich, as the phrase goes, and Anastasia is my only child. Speak, sir," she added, warmly, evidently piqued at my grave and continued silence. "What can prevent you at once demanding the hand of the princess? Understand me, Monsieur Zadonskoi, I have acted unwisely in telling you all this, but I confide in the delicacy of feeling and generosity that should distinguish every gentleman. I trust in your honour, prince;" her voice was now broken and husky with emotion; "remember," she continued, "I have but one daughter—one only child—but *one*."

She wept.

"Princess," said I, in a tone of the deepest respect and humility, "pardon me if I tell you, that it is impossible, utterly impossible for me to give you an answer; grant me, however, the favour of an interview with your daughter—and——"

"Never!" said she, haughtily, and rising in extreme agitation from her seat.

"As you please, princess," I replied, coldly—rising also—but with the same air of respectful humility as before.

She appeared to consider for a moment; suddenly she made a sign with her hand, indicative of an invitation to remain, and left me alone.

Five minutes passed thus; my heart was beating fast and violently, but my mind was clear and unfettered, and my judgment cool. I was hopelessly seeking in my heart for a spark of love of sufficient intensity to counterbalance the impressive valedictory *last* entreaty of poor Olga, as regarded the possibility of my marriage with the princess; but alas! my search was unavailing.

The door was thrown open suddenly, and Anastasia entered the salon.

Heavens! what a change since I had last seen her,—and in how short a time was it wrought!

She was now almost in the middle of the room; she stood there for a moment, and almost tottered; she appeared as if about to faint: I hastened forward at once, fearing she would have fallen, presented my hand, and led her to a chair.

I stood opposite to her. We were both silent for a while. Her large dark eyes were heavy with an inexpressible grief, they seemed larger than ever, and to seek in mine for something like sympathy and consolation; her pallid lips were hopelessly striving to compress themselves into the old arch smile; her small and delicate hands rested on her knees, they were so pale, so thin, and so transparent, that I felt pierced to the heart, and I bitterly regretted at that moment all the folly of the past that now necessitated this painful interview.

"Princess," said I, "at last you are aware that I have behaved very ill: you must despise me."

Her wan cheeks were suffused with a faint and sickly blush.

"I do not deserve your love, princess, you cannot, should not, must not love me."

She turned away, leant her elbow upon the small work-table

near her, and covered her face with her hands. I thought I could see tears stealing through her fingers.

I tried to soothe her, but to no purpose.

"Oh, my God!" she murmured, nearly inaudibly.

I could obtain no other word from the excited girl.

This threatened to become insupportable; and in another moment I would have sunk upon my knees before her,—and the sacred injunction of poor Olga would have been forgotten.

Another painful silence here ensued.

After a moment I again mustered courage to address her, and with as much firmness of voice as I could command under the painful circumstances, I said :

"Princess!—Believe me, from my heart, that I appreciate the distinction you have accorded me, but it is also my duty to tell you, that from circumstances—which it is unnecessary, as it would be painful to enter into—I am for ever debarred from taking advantage of my happiness, and the honour you have done me; there is, Anastasia, an insuperable bar—an—an—there is—— simply, princess, it is impossible for me to marry you. Even should you love me now, a union with one so wayward and unamiable as myself would but cause you a lifetime of misery and regret. The conversation I have but now had with your mother necessitates on my part this candid and almost coarse explanation, and candour, explicit candour, is now a sterner duty than even delicacy between us; I sincerely trust, however, that she is under a misapprehension with regard to your feelings, from which it will be for you to disabuse her. You must perceive, princess, that as a feeble atonement, I have not shrunk from presenting myself before your eyes in the most despicable position; I even confess that I deserve it, and you must understand my character sufficiently to know that this is the greatest sacrifice I can make in acknowledgment of the pain I may have unwittingly occasioned

you. Whatever bad opinion you may have formed of me, I silently submit to it; I merit it heartily; and when I own further that this sad interview makes me despise myself, I cannot be surprised, I dare not be offended, if—whatever may have been your previous sentiments towards one so unworthy as myself—you yourself condemn me also.”

The words were meaningless, sheer nonsense indeed, or perhaps worse? but what was I to say?—what was I to do? Nothing. I was in every way morally fettered, putting my own inclinations utterly out of the question; hence I had no choice but to generalise in false sentiment like a jesuit.

At last she appeared fully to understand me, and turned towards me: she was pale and rigid as a statue of alabaster, but her eyes were beautifully—wildly—animated. They seemed unnaturally large and brilliant; by degrees they dilated, and she arose slowly from her chair; a deep flush of passion gradually overspread her face, her lips quivered, and the hand that had grasped the seat she had so lately occupied, trembled convulsively. She had assumed in her excitement the appearance of a pythoness on the inspired tripod. I never saw rage and resentment more fiercely delineated on a human countenance than in the face of that patrician and gentle girl.

“I abhor you!” said she.

I bowed to her with the deepest respect, and left the salon. I had but half descended the stairs when I heard a strange and fearful shriek, that even now rings in my ears as I write, accompanied by an ominous and hollow sound, as of the fall of an inanimate body on the floor of the apartments above. I stood for a single instant irresolute what to do, but I heard a rush of feet, immediately followed by the hysterics of the women of the princess’ household; the voice of the mother of the unhappy girl, predominated in this wailing outcry; the princess was then properly attended,

and I left the house slowly for my own quarters. I felt as though I was a fiend, doomed to carry with me woe, suffering, and misery in every direction: assuredly my feelings were not enviable at that moment.

An hour later I was sitting in a *troika*, and the walls of the fortress of Kislovodsk were far behind me. A few miles beyond the fort of Esentoukoff, I perceived, at no great distance from the high road, the narrow ravine in which my gallant Tscherkessian charger had succumbed to the terrible exertion to which my passions had so cruelly urged him. The body of my horse was lying on the same spot where I had left it; but it had been stripped of its Caucasian *cadjara* and *yachar-ick**—no doubt by some passing Cossacks or Tscherkesses—and in place of my saddle I beheld a hideous group of vultures from the mountains perched upon the back of what was once my noble steed. It was an epitome of the sad episode of my history: the creature's mad rushing to its fate—how suggestive of those unbridled passions! its cruel death, how like the termination of my dream of guilt and folly! and the vultures, are these not regrets, too? I, sighed over my loss and turned away.

* * * * *

And now I have been some months in this lonely fortress, I frequently pass in review the events so recently gone by, and I ask myself, why I did not take advantage of the smiling future which fate seemed to have opened to me, where the heart's haven and the soul's peace should have awaited me? How often alas! have I neglected the beacon—then—as now! No, I fear I could not have accustomed myself to the honied monotony of the flower-wreathed chains! I am like the mariner born and brought up on board a pirate vessel, on the rolling bosom of the ocean, whose heart from earliest infancy is familiar

* Saddle and bridle.

with its perils, its tempests, battles, and vicissitudes, and who suddenly finds himself thrown upon a desolate island, where he is pining for the wild joys of his sea-life, notwithstanding the wilderness of beauty—the terrestrial though unpeopled paradise around him. It is so with me; my thirst for change and for excitement is boundless and unquenchable, and my ideal is still perhaps to be found, and I am still free—free as the wild winds of the mountains, though my freedom is pregnant with wretchedness, danger, and vicissitude.

* * * * *

A longer time—a sad and more lengthened period has elapsed since I last glanced at these sad reminiscences of an erring and wayward mind, and during that interim much sad intelligence of the actors of the fitful little drama of Pjatigorod and Kislovodsk has winged its ominous flight even to the far Caucasus. A year, a slow and sombre year, a blank in my existence, has passed in loneliness and disquietude with me since I last saw them.

Olga is dead! And it is only at this moment, as I write, that I have found how fatally dear she was to me. Alas! how sad that the ONE object, the heart's haven, should so often in life be discovered by the treasure-seeker either *where*, in honour, in right, and in law, he should not even raise his wistful eyes, or *when* it is too late—when age has already grasped him by his locks, and sprinkled them with silver; when life has lost its charm, and the heart, withered and old, perhaps prematurely so, can no longer put forth its tendrils of affection with the alluring early perfumes as of yore, and can no longer shed its blossoms on the thing it loves.

Olga, poor Olga! is no more. The heart that beat so warmly and devotedly is cold and silent. She died at Nice. She fell a victim to the insidious fiend, consumption, that had so long lurked in her fragile frame, and which had latterly committed such

dreadful ravages upon her strength, while my heart whispered to me, that her fate was hurried to its climax by her secret mental sufferings.

She had, it seems, returned to Moscow, but the change from the balmy air and southern climate of the Caucasus was too much for her failing powers, and she remained for a long time seriously indisposed. I heard also that some little scandal was occasioned in their own immediate circle, which was also mine, by the report of an estrangement between herself and her husband. None could guess the cause, as Olga was a model of propriety to the married ladies of St. Petersburg and Moscow, and as the extreme and exaggerated devotion of her ancient helpmate partook even more of the ridiculous than the interesting. I alone, perhaps, could account for this extraordinary change; and I found no difficulty in attributing it to the painful admission which in a moment of distraction she had made to her husband, and of which she had advised me in her last and farewell letter. Strange fatality, that to the last I should be the chief cause of her anxiety and misery. As her health, however, failed more obviously and rapidly, day by day, his affection appeared to conquer his jealousy, his resentment, and even his suspicions, and he became again the same fond husband as before.

She was soon afterwards ordered change of climate, and her husband prepared to carry this advice into immediate effect; but the greatest difficulty he encountered in this was from herself: she strenuously refused to quit her native country, as she was convinced it was in vain, as she felt that her days were numbered, that she was past all recovery—and urged that all she desired was to pass the last remaining hours of her fading existence in peace and retirement. But her wishes were overruled, as the majority of the physicians were of opinion that her life might even yet be preserved by a timely and entire change of air and

scene. She accordingly accompanied her husband, who at once set out for Vienna. After a short sojourn at this second Paris of the Austrian dominions, they proceeded to northern Italy, and remained some time at Milan. But she still withered day by day, and her health and spirits hourly decreased. Tuscany and sunny Florence were tried in vain; they proceeded gradually to the coast by way of Pisa; but the closing scene of her short and fated life (she was but six-and-twenty) took place at Nice. It had long been obvious to her distracted husband, at the suggestion of the first professional advice that Europe could produce, there was no longer room for the remotest hope—it had been the opinion of poor Olga herself previous to leaving Moscow; but, nevertheless, a strange and inexplicable restlessness appeared to have taken possession of her. Nothing could induce her to remain beyond a short space in any of those beautiful cities, and it was only the utter prostration of her powers that retained her in Nice. She lingered for two or three weeks, and faded from among the children of men. She passed away gradually, and so insensibly that it was believed by her attendants that she was but slumbering for some time even after she had ceased to be.

All these details I ascertained, subsequently, from connections of my own, who had been informed upon these points, and who communicated with me in my lonely exile in the fortress of N——. The facts themselves I first learned from the advent of a letter in the garrison some months ago; it was in a hand I was totally unacquainted with; but it was from Alexander Petrovitch Borisoff, the husband of Olga, and it ran as follows:—

“NICE, *September 4, 18—*.

“The gay and brilliant Prince Fedor Ramanovitch Zadonskoi, of the Imperial Life Guards of the Emperor of all the Russias, no doubt never expected to hear again in this life of or from the old fool who married the

fated and unhappy woman whom he had condescended to trifle with; whose moral and physical health, and whose peace on earth, and, perhaps, in heaven, he has ruined—and whom he indirectly persecuted to her death. I, sir, have also worn the imperial epaulet; and the time has been when but one course would have remained open to us. But I am bound, by a death-bed vow, to the wretched victim of your heartlessness; and it is not when the scanty hair is silvered by the hand of time—when the blood is cooled by the chill of years, and the mind is calm and unbiassed by prejudice—that the judgment resorts to violence for vengeance. I have chosen another and a better phase of action, based, I hope, upon Christian feeling, and true philosophy; and however my determination may awaken your contempt and your surprise—I, nevertheless, ‘*Forgive you.*’ The time will come, young man, when you will understand my conduct in this, and fully appreciate your own. Yes! I forgive you the cruel injury that has dishonoured my grey hairs, and robbed me of the wretched being who should, and who might, have been their support and consolation. I should be more or less than man could I forget it. I am the more inclined to this, as I cannot hide from my conscience that I am myself far from blameless. I was a fool when I married a young and beautiful woman, who was not sufficiently advanced in life, but that she was more generally taken for my child than for my wife. I was a fool when I believed that the honourable and disinterested attachment of a worthy man—as I think I may, according to the general suffrage of my fellow-men, without egotism, term myself—could have won her from her regrets, and filled the vacuum of her shattered heart. I was a fool when I fancied that my trusting and undeviating devotion would have armed her against temptation; when I believed that honour would have restrained you from destroying the every earthly happiness of one who offered no excuse or opportunity for the outrage, but in the unoffending silvered locks I have already too often mentioned, and the kindness that my unsuspecting good-will ever evinced towards you: I was wrong in all this, Prince Zadonskoi; and this sad letter, and the enclosure forwarded by me—I, who have every reason to wish you every ill in life—is but a portion of my self-imposed penance. We may never meet again. I hope not. The only favour I ask you, indeed, in return for this almost superhuman abnegation of every natural impulse, passion, and feeling, is that you will avoid me as scrupulously as I shall avoid you. If any strange concatenation of chances should bring us together—and such a possibility must, indeed, be fortuitous and unforeseen, as I never intend to return again to Russia,—let it be as though we had never met.

“I will yet again tax your patience before we part—I trust for ever. Hear me, and ponder on my words: the solemn tenor of this letter merits it indeed. Pause, young man! pause in your career! Pause and reflect! Believe me, and the time will come when you will think so, our

goal is upward and heavenward; and the lives of men, and the broken hearts and reputations of women—regrets and remorse—will form but indifferent steps for the ascent. I forgive you this bad deed, I repeat—for I sincerely believe that you are to be pitied. May Heaven pardon you also—though I dare scarcely hope it—and I cannot think so. I have done. I will merely add, that I lay the death of the woman I loved—the sad fate of the wife of my bosom—to your account: that you have wrecked my every hope of peace on earth, and made me a wanderer over its wide extent, till the approaching termination of the days you have so wantonly embittered; and that you have piled degradation upon a name hitherto intact, inviolate, and unsullied."

The letter fell from my hands, and I remained, as it were, for some time in a moral trance. I was mentally paralysed.

I suffered less when covered by the pistol of Frantovskoi.

My eyes turned mechanically towards the ground, and I perceived a small and delicately-shaped note, which had fallen out from the folds of the letter that had caused me such emotion. I raised it from the carpet, and at once recognised the well-known writing of poor Olga. But, oh! how altered, how wide and straggling! how suggestive of the change I could picture to myself! how readily ruthless imagination could fancy the fevered, trembling, and attenuated hand that had traced the superscription!

It was some time before I could raise it from the carpet, and when I had done so, a short period again elapsed before I could nerve myself to break the seal—my hands trembled like aspen leaves. At last I succeeded in opening it—a haze seemed to float before my eyes; something fell from the billet to the ground; it was a dried and withered flower, but I knew it well; it was all that was left of a beautiful azalea that some years ago I had presented to her at a ball at the palace of the Countess Pauline Filemonoff, one of my aunts, and to whose husband, a general officer, I was then aide-de-camp. It was the *first* time we had met.

She used to wear it in a curious filigree amulet of Indian workmanship. How often I had laughed at her, and with her, for the sentimentality of the arrangement—how little I dreamed of seeing it again, and under such circumstances.

Her letter was short, but every syllable of its melancholy contents pierced my heart like a poignard. It ran thus :

“Nicos, June 19, 18—.

“The fitful struggle is over! The scene is ending, beloved one! I am dying, Zadonskoi! And, even on the verge of eternity, I dread to own to myself, that my chief concern is that you are not here to close my weary eyes—to kiss my forehead at parting—to hear my last fervent blessing—and my last profession of forgiveness and love. My greatest agony is, the conviction that I shall never see you more. And now—will you believe—can you doubt, that *one* heart breathed its last breath at your feet—dying, as it has lived, in loving you without bounds;—that heart, that since it learned now to beat—since it first awoke to its life of love—beat for you—and for you only—without thought of self, of consequences, or of aught else on earth? Farewell! Think of me, and love my memory, at least. Farewell, Fedor! With my last breath I sigh your name. Farewell!—farewell for ever!”

I put my hands before my face. The blood seemed to rush up to my temples with an impetus that I could almost *hear*. I felt choking. I rushed to the windows, and threw them open—I could not breathe, and I wanted air. I was not master of myself; I could have sprung into the fearful depths below me.

It was some time before I could regain my self-command. At last I could, to a certain degree, collect my thoughts, and I slowly returned to the table. I threw myself into my chair again, and once more read that harrowing letter. I was now comparatively calm; it had indeed cost me a violent exertion, and the conclusions to which it enabled me to arrive wrung my heart to its very core and pierced me to the quick; remorse and retrospection were predominant at that moment of intense anguish, and I could find *no* palliation for the past.

There they lay, side by side, the *first* memento and the *last*—the flower and the letter. It was a lesson, and a bitter one indeed. How little did I anticipate amid the meaningless *persiflages*, the perfumed nicety of a drawing-room flirtation, during which I had given her that withered thing so many years before, that I was sowing the cruel harvest of regrets that I was now reaping. How the vaunted force of my cynical philosophy had vanished! What would I have given at that moment for a *friend* to whom I could have communicated the overwhelming weight of mental anguish that oppressed me. Alas! I had no friend, and the blame lay with myself. I had refused to believe in the name of friendship, and I was, in consequence, alone.

Oh! ye on whom devolves the education of the young, reflect on the incalculable responsibility attached to the development of the ever-varying characters of those dependent on your care. My passions, and their fatal consequences, I entirely attribute to the wilful negligence or capriciousness—the want of judgment of those who so cruelly misled the invaluable days of my childhood and my boyhood, who utterly misunderstood me, and made me what I am. I was naturally open and warmhearted. I was repulsed. I had originally been possessed of warm and cordial sympathies; they were rebutted; and the result has been, that I have learned to look with the most perfect indifference upon every phase of human feeling and emotion. I now sympathise with none. How, then, in my agony of heart could I expect communion of feeling with a living soul?

Like the fair and widowed De Montmorenci, I could have said—

“Rien ne m'est plus—
Plus ne m'est rien.”

And in truth I felt stricken, humbled, and desolate.

But alas! the human mind is elastic, and is ever in a state of transition, and before the flight of many months she had already become with me a matter of past history: it was but a tie in life the less and a memory the more. But were I to arrive at the fabulous age and superhuman grandeur of the pre-Adamite caliphs of the oriental myth, I could never forget the name of Olga. It must be sacred and cherished in my heart while it beats responsive to the light of life!

Anastasia has never married. She still passes her time in Moscow or St. Petersburg; in both of which capitals she has become a celebrity, and I hear is much talked of as a *bas bleu* and an *esprit fort*. She has also, I understand, become remarkable for her eccentricity and originality. She is, they say, feared and hated in society for the cruel irony of her satirical power and her merciless sarcasms. Her talents and undeniable beauty, accomplishments, and position have obtained her many admirers, and more than one brilliant offer of marriage, but she has steadily refused them all.

The ancient Doge's custom of wedding Venice to the sea, according to Jean Paul Richter, always put him in mind of the marriage of a coquette, who, in spite of the ceremony, remains like the Adriatic after swallowing the ring, as free to the flags of all nations as before. But it will not be so with the Princess Anastasia; she appears to have made up her mind never to change her name, and the astonished circles of the *élite* of both cities are wearied with conjecturing the motives and the mystery that could have led so young, so beautiful and interesting a woman to a resolve so unusual, but with her apparently so irrevocable.*

* * *Note.*—The noble lady here designated as the Princess Anastasia Ohotnikoff, whose heart and whose pride were so cruelly lacerated, as we have detailed in the foregoing true and melancholy history, is yet living, and still, though now advanced in years, one of the most

They tell me also that she is no longer a coquette. She is, it seems, strangely altered, and her demeanour is at times so *bizarre* in society as to awaken the most serious fears that her intellect is slightly impaired. Sad termination to an ephemeral connection, commenced in levity, folly, and vanity on my part, and now, on my part again, ended in the bitterest remorse, and in meaningless and unavailing regrets.

And the third victim—Frantovskoi! I remembered only now that he was my friend. I remembered him as I was wont to see him, in all the plenitude of his strength, his youth, and beauty; more, from his peculiar and constitutional egotism—absolutely revelling in them. All the evil and reprehensible phases of his peculiar character had vanished from my thought—death had left nothing but the beautiful. I could hardly convince my mind that he had maligned the reputation of an innocent and noble lady; that he had slandered me; that he had conspired to assassinate me; and had even taken the initiative towards it by wounding me, as I stood on the dizzy verge of that fatal precipice, to the best of his belief, unarmed, helpless, and duped. I could hardly persuade myself that he had himself rushed upon his fate, resisting to the last every chance of escape, as if an evil demon had possessed him, and goaded him onward to his destiny. All this I saw, but it was through a dim haze. But there was ONE palpable reality, a vast and appalling *fact* that I could not avoid, that seemed to meet me at every turn, to echo

distinguished and talented women of the court circles of both the metropolises of the Russias; but she has never married, and has constantly declined the most flattering opportunities of doing so. She is still remarkable for the *hardiess* of her opinions, and the singular eccentricities of her general conduct. She is, however, a privileged person. She has even been more than suspected of a mental derangement; and this opinion has gained ground with her increasing years.

The elder Princess Ohotnikoff, her mother, is long since dead.

my thoughts, and ring in my ears from every side, like the chorus of the Greek tragedies, replete with a fearful and terrible meaning—"You have slain him!—you have slain him!"

How vain appeared to me, then, the sophistries which had, ere this, armed me against the busy whisperings of conscience, when the life of a fellow-creature had before fallen by my hand, a sacrifice to the delusive phantom, Honour! A film seemed to have fallen from my eyes, and I now perceived the utter fallacy of all the spurious philosophy on which I had propped my line of conduct through life. What heartfelt and positive loathing the very name of duelling occasioned me; how I anathematised all those who by their influence and example had established the baneful custom, even from the days of David and the Colossus of Gath, in the Scriptures, the Horatii and Curiatii of the Roman annalists, and the fictitious heroes of Homer, though most of these mythic and semi-mythic heroes had not ignoble and petty passions and private animosities for their objects. No amount of mental casuistry could prove to me, *then*, that any real benefit accrues to the survivor of a murderous rencontre of this kind, though the sanguinary death of his adversary may have for the time, and only for the time, appeased his lust of vengeance, and gratified his passion of hate. And if the death of a human being, by the hand of another, is a *crime*, is the onus lessened, because it is perpetrated according to every rule and etiquette of an almost obsolete human form? It is a serious question, indeed, a mystery that I shall have one day, perhaps, to solve.

Poor Frantovskoi! what would I have given at that moment, notwithstanding all his faults, all his criminality, to have thrown my arms around him, could I have but seen him living and breathing once again before me! This mental admission was much for me, but I was effectually humbled. What would I not

even have done to have exchanged positions during that fearful conflict with remorse—gifted and envied though they pretend I am—with the humblest soldier of the garrison, or even with the most abject menial attached to my service.

Yes! I suffered much at that time; and the official reports of the fortress of N——, no doubt still retained by its worthy old commandant, bear witness that I was for a month confined to my quarters as unfit for duty, with what they were pleased to call intermittent fever. I gradually, however, became convalescent in mind and body; the reaction again took place, and I, after a time fell back, I fear, into my old character.

I have become once more the same wayward being as before, but nevertheless the fatal termination of my short sojourn at the hot wells of the Caucasus has made a deep and lasting impression upon me, which I shall retain to my dying hour.

A few weeks of levity, vanity, and folly, had ended in a broken heart and death, a duel—a conventional murder—and madness!

CHAPTER VI.

PREDESTINATION.

(FROM THE PAPERS OF ZADONSKOI.)

It once happened that I was quartered for a couple of weeks at a *stanitza* of Don Cossacks, of the sea of Azof, in the territory of the Don, and on the right bank of the superb river of that name. Besides the regular *polks* that constituted the Cossack station, there was an infantry regiment in the place. The combined officers of these corps gave, as is usual among military men in that portion of southern Russia, a series of evening reunions among themselves; and play and wine, and wine and play, were with us the programme of the amusements that closed our monotonous days.

Upon one occasion, however, we were assembled at the quarters of Major Treskoff; and gambling for the nonce not being found sufficiently entertaining, the cards and dice were pitched under the table. There was a pause as regards the wine, for we had taken more than sufficient; and we had recourse for once to rational conversation, and, contrary to the general rule, it bade fair to become interesting.

The topic for discussion chanced to be the peculiar tenets of the Mussulman creed. Many conflicting opinions were ventured upon the Mahometan belief, that the fate of men, and even the instant of their death, is noted and predestined by Providence; which peculiar credence finds supporters even among our more orthodox co-religionists. Nearly every one present had either an extraordinary story to relate, or an observation of some kind, *pro* or *contra*, to make upon the subject.

"All this proves nothing, gentlemen," said the old major; "because no one of you, as it appears to me, has been a personal witness to any of these extraordinary occurrences and coincidences on which you so confidently base your opinions."

"You are right, major," said some of the men present; "but we have heard what we have advanced from the most unimpeachable authority."

"It is absurd!" said some one; "all this does not decide the present question. Where are these persons upon whose simple word you have relied so devoutly, and who have pretended thus impiously to read the date of any man's death-hour in the records of destiny? Bah! nonsense! And if predestination really exists, why are we, then, possessed of volition or judgment? What becomes of the doctrine of free agency? and why should we have to render hereafter an account of our actions or misdoings?"

Here a young Cossack officer, who had been sitting silent all the evening in a distant corner of the room, rose from his seat and approached slowly to the table, as he cast a tranquil glance of mild self-possession around him. He was a native of Servia, and his name was Alexes Karnovitch.

The appearance of Lieutenant Karnovitch was strictly in harmony with his character. He was tall, well made, and of a dark olive complexion; hair black as night; eyes of the same colour, large and penetrating; a bold and regular nose, a peculiarity of his race; a cold and pensive smile was continually playing on his pale lips: all this, together with a certain air of mystery that pervaded his every movement, irresistibly put me in mind of the sombre Don Guttiere, in the "*Houra y Venganza*," or of the heroes of some other of the *capa y espada* dramas of Calderon. He had first attracted my attention by not appearing to possess the remotest sympathy with the men among whom he lived, and by his utter self-isolation.

He was a brave and excellent soldier: he spoke little, and, indeed, was generally very taciturn; but when he did speak, it was to the purpose. He was intimate with none, and never spoke either of his private life or his affairs. He scarcely touched wine; and as for the pretty Cossack girls, whose good graces are, it is said, so difficult to obtain, Karnovitch did not even appear aware of their existence. The rumour, nevertheless, was whispered through the stanitza, that the lady of the Polkovnik, or commander of his polk, looked with anything but indifference upon those wild and expressive eyes of his. He himself, however, was annoyed, and would even lose his equanimity of temper, if the remotest allusion was made to that effect in his presence.

There was but one passion in which he indulged, and this predilection he did not even care to hide. It was play. He was, indeed, a most passionate gambler. Sitting behind the green-baized table, he could forget all his usual impassive coldness, and he even became at times fearfully excited; but he was rarely fortunate, and he frequently rose a loser. Nevertheless, his ill-fortune never discouraged him; on the contrary, it seemed but to increase his obstinacy in striving for the favours of the hoodwinked goddess. A story was told of him, that on one occasion, during an expedition on a bivouac, and at night, he was playing Pharo with a brother officer on a shabrack, and that chance for once was very much in his favour. Suddenly a sharp firing was heard at the outposts, together with the exciting *appel* of the bugles and trumpets; all rushed, of course, to their respective posts, and to their arms. "Hallo! there; stop a moment: let us play *va banque le tout*!" shouted Karnovitch to one of the players most interested, and without rising from his seat. "*Va banque*! upon the queen of hearts!" rejoined the other, whilst darting into the thick of the fray.

Regardless of his lonely position, and the din and uproar of the engagement, which now surged around him, Karnovitch continued to proceed deliberately with his game. He lost the stake.

When he had mounted and rejoined his polk, the action had already become general, and a hot fusilade was kept up from both sides. But Karnovitch was heedless of the shower of bullets, and the flashing *shashkas* of the Tscherkesses, who were giving his division all their work to do, for he was principally in search of his equally ardent but more fortunate partner in this singular game.

"Your queen of hearts has won!" he exclaimed, at the top of his voice, on recognising his comrade in the midst of the action in which he was engaged. The polk was then busily employed in driving the mountaineers from the forest ambush in which they had ensconced themselves. He rode up to his friend through the thickest of the fire, and, producing his purse, coolly paid the money he had lost, utterly regardless of the circumstances, and the *mal-à-propos* time and place he had chosen for the purpose. After which he galloped back to the station, and immediately afterwards headed a charge of his own men, in which he personally distinguished himself most gallantly, as usual, against the infuriated Tscherkesses, till they were beaten back.

When Lieutenant Karnovitch approached the table, every one present became silent, in the hope of hearing something original from so original a person.

"Gentlemen!" said he (his sonorous voice was calm, though of a lower tone than ordinary)—"Gentlemen! why this useless discussion? You wish for proofs. It is but just. And I propose to make an experiment upon myself, whether a man can, of his own free will, dispose of his life. We shall then

ascertain, if it be possible to put the dial of Time forward, and so anticipate the appointed hour. If it is, free agency is paramount; predestination vanishes like a dream, and the question is decided. Who among you is ready for a wager?"

"Not I!"—"Nor I!" was chorussed round the room. "What a comical fellow you are, Karnovitch; how on earth came such nonsense into a man's head?"

"Well: *I* am willing," said I, laughing.

"What position in the argument do you maintain, Zadonskoi?" he demanded, gravely.

"I protest against predestination."

"And what is your stake?" he added.

"All that I have about me." Saying this, I emptied my purse, and threw about five-and-twenty imperials upon the table, and pushed them into the midst of it.

"I accept the wager," replied Karnovitch, in a sombre voice. "Major Treskoff, you will be our umpire: here are twenty imperials; the remaining five you owe me. Do me, therefore, the favour at present to add them to the bank."

"Very well," replied the old officer, as he complied with his request. "But I really do not exactly understand the point; and I cannot possibly conceive how you are going to settle the affair."

Karnovitch proceeded slowly into the bedroom of the major. We followed him. Upon the wall a variety of arms of different descriptions, nations, and periods, were hanging; and he took down at random one of a pair of highly-ornamented Turkish pistols from the nail. We did not yet understand his intention; but when we perceived him coolly cocking and priming the weapon, several of his comrades sprang from their seats in surprise and fear, while others seized his arm. This extraordinary scene had partially sobered them.

"What are you about? This is sheer madness!" said some one.

"Gentlemen!" said he, quickly, while freeing his arms—which he did somewhat energetically—"which of you is ready to pay twenty-five imperials for me?"

No one replied, of course, to so very pointed a question.

Karnovitch returned to the little salon, and took a chair near the table. We followed him. With a gesture he invited us to be seated. He was silently obeyed. In that moment it appeared as if he exercised a mysterious and incomprehensible influence over us all. I looked him long and inquiringly in the face, but he met and returned my glance with his habitual calmness: a slightly ironical smile was even playing about his thin lips; but, notwithstanding his undeniable self-possession, it occurred to me that I could already trace the stamp of death upon his pale features. I have frequently observed, and many far older soldiers than myself have confirmed the observation, that this peculiar expression, which frequently shows itself on the faces of men who are fated to die within a few hours' time, is an unmistakeable omen. It may be merely a military superstition; but I have so often remarked it, that I have learned to believe in it, without caring to look too narrowly into my grounds of credence in this singular idea.

"You will, nevertheless, die to-night, Lieutenant Karnovitch," said I to him in a subdued and meaning voice. He turned quickly round upon me, but his reply was cool and deliberate.

"It is possible, sir!"

He then turned to the major, and asked him if the pistol was loaded, which he still held in his hand; the major, however, could not tell whether it was or not.

"That will do, Karnovitch; enough of absurdity," exclaimed

several of the officers present ; "it is, no doubt, loaded, since it was hanging where it was ; besides, it is one of the major's holsters ; he has used them lately instead of the regulation pistols. What pleasure can you find in continuing this farce any longer ?"

"It's a foolish joke !" added another.

"Well, I bet twenty imperials to the contrary !" said a third. "I hold that the pistol is *not* loaded."

"I accept the wager," said a young Cossack officer hastily.

The new bet was at once agreed upon.

This long ceremony appeared to be now bordering on the ridiculous, and, in point of fact, I began to suspect the Servian of bravado. "Listen," said I, "Karnovitch : either shoot yourself at once, like a good fellow, or replace the pistol where you took it from, and let us put an end to this comedy, and get to bed."

"Oh ! by all means," said several men present, who were, no doubt, of my opinion : "one or the other, and let us retire."

"Gentlemen, I pray you, do not move from your places !" said the fatalist, pointing the muzzle of the pistol against his forehead. All suddenly appeared immoveable as statues, but still not thinking he was in earnest. "Lieutenant Zadonskoi," added he, "pray take a card, and throw it into the air."

Hardly understanding what this was for, I chose one from a scattered pack on the table before me—if I recollect well, it was the ace of spades that I chose ; I threw it upwards as he had desired me ; every one in the room was at the highest pitch of curiosity, and yet we all thought it was a mere farce, and, with suspended respiration, all eyes were fixed upon the flight of the card, which descended slowly ; in that very moment, when it touched the table again, the Servian touched the trigger of the pistol.

It had missed fire.*

The room was all in excitement in an instant, and all spoke at once.

"Thanks to God!" exclaimed several voices: "it was not loaded."

"Let us, however, try again," said Karnovitch. He cocked and primed the pistol a second time, aimed at a foraging cap hanging over the window at the further end of the chamber, and at once fired; the smoke filled the room; when it had cleared away, the cap was taken from its place; it was found to be hit in its very centre, the ball had gone through it, of course, and had deeply penetrated the wall, where it lay buried.

For a short interval no one was able to utter a word; the dropping of a pin could have been heard distinctly, but for the chink of my imperials, which Karnovitch was calmly dropping one by one into his purse.

The conversation now commenced again with the general expression of our surprise, that the weapon should have missed fire the first time; some pretended that the vent must have been rusty, while others were of opinion that the powder was originally damp, and that the obstinate fatalist had, unobserved, poured some that was dryer upon it, before the second attempt; but I protested against this last conjecture, as I had never taken my eyes from the pistol for a moment, ever since it missed its first fire.

"You are fortunate at hazard, sir!" said I to Karnovitch.

"It is the first time in my life, on the contrary," replied he, with a quiet smile, "that I have had a better chance than some malignant devil allows me at Pharo and Landsknecht."

* This extraordinary circumstance took place at Stanitzs, near Rostoff, on the Don, in the year 184—, and made a great sensation at the time.

"For that reason, no doubt," I continued, "it was also a little more uncertain."

"Well, sir," he demanded, "have you begun to feel yourself a proselyte to predestination?"

"Not exactly," I responded; "but this is, certainly, an extraordinary circumstance. I cannot, however, remember now why I imagined that you would, nevertheless, die to-night; and, notwithstanding this marvellous interposition of Providence, I will be candid enough to tell you that I *still* think so."

That very same man, who, but a few moments before, pointed a deadly weapon so recklessly at his head, now suddenly became restless and confused.

"However, we have enough for the present," said he, rising, with some little display of temper. "Our wager is over, and, I think, that your remarks are now entirely out of place." He took his foraging cap and sabre from a corner, and left the company; his impassible command of nerve had left him. This appeared strange to me at the moment, and with good reason.

Soon after this we began to disperse and regain our respective quarters, forming all sorts of conjectures as we went upon the inexplicable conduct of Karnovitch, and my acquaintances, undoubtedly, believing me a most heartless egotist, because I had laid a wager against a madman who seemed determined upon shooting himself, as if he could not have found a favourable opportunity of doing so without me, with greater comfort, if not with greater *éclat*; but, in reality (though I did not choose to own it), I had looked upon the whole affair as a mere fan-faronade, till the very click of the pistol proved my error.

I returned home to my billet through the sinuous and narrow streets of the stanitza; the moon was at the full and red as fire, and had just begun to show above the irregular roofs of the wooden houses; the stars were peacefully glimmering from the

dark blue firmament in which they were set; and I could not help smiling when the idea occurred to me, that in ages long gone by there were people living under the full impression that these heavenly lights had an immediate influence over their vain and meaningless existences, and were, indeed, the beacons of their several destinies; that these myriad-worlds of fire were hung on high by the immortal *Tecton*, the omnipotent Creator, for the sole and express purpose of shining over the follies and vices of their ephemeral instant of being. Oh! the inconceivable presumption and egotism of human nature! The stars still continue to glimmer as calmly and coldly as in the days of yore; but the feeble things of human clay, that fretted their evanescent hour—where are they, with their passions, interests, and impulses? Where?

Many similar reflections passed through my mind; but I hate dwelling too long upon these abstract ideas; they but lead the mind into an inextricable labyrinth, and they make me hate and doubt everything: besides, to what do they tend after all?"

In early youth I was much given to meditation. I loved to dwell in a world of my own creation; my mind was a perpetual panorama of *chateaux en Espagne* and romances of my own conception; and these stirring or brilliant images passed with such rapidity and so continually through my thoughts, that they grew at last insipid. I pallid my imagination, which was naturally vivid and ardent; like a fiery courser, I spurred it to the utmost, when it should have been spared, and restrained—it has become jaded. And what has it all brought me? Nothing but a vague sense of mental weariness; a fatigue such as the body knows after a sleepless night of nightmare and fevered disquiet, or like the corporeal reaction after a period of the wildest dissipation. In this prodigal expenditure of the mind's wealth I have exhausted the fire of my soul, and much even of the freshness and powerful

impulses of the heart, so indispensable to the struggle with the material world. I entered life, having already, as it were, lived my allotted time in imagination; scarcely anything I met with in its realities was new to me, and I grew sad and sick of life's volume, like one who in sheer idleness peruses once more the pages of a long familiar book.

The singular occurrences of that evening had produced a deep impression of melancholy upon my mind, and caused me also a certain nervous excitement. I will not say that I now believe in predestination, but I must allow that in those days I was strongly biassed towards a faith in it, and on that particular evening I trusted to it most emphatically; the immediate proof I had witnessed was too convincing, and I was pondering so deeply upon all this, forgetful at the same time of my ridicule of the astrology and speculations of our predecessors, that I nearly fell into the same error with themselves—that is, I was pre-occupied with dreams and with the stars, and “I mistook my road.” I stopped at the right moment, however, and throwing metaphysics on one side, I began at once to look to actual facts—my feet. This last precaution I also took at the proper time, for a little more, one step further, and I should have fallen to the ground, as I had already stumbled over something heavy and soft, but apparently not a living being;—yet what could it be? In bending down for a nearer inspection—the moon was now shining brightly over the street—what did I behold?—what was the obstruction in my path? Heavens! it was a corpse! but fortunately it was only that of a defunct pig which was lying before me, covered with blood, and nearly severed in two by the stroke of a sabre! Scarcely had I assured myself of that fact, when I heard hurried footsteps from behind: two Cossacks came towards me, running from a narrow by-street. One of them, who approached first, inquired anxiously if I had seen a drunken

Cossack insanelly hunting a sober pig. I informed them that I had not had the felicity of meeting with the drunken warrior himself; but I pointed out to them what remained of the unfortunate victim of his doughty valour.

"Oh, the robber!" said the other, "as soon as he gets drunk he sabres everybody and everything that he falls in with. Let us go, Nikitka, and find the rascal: we must tie him up or else——"

They left me to pursue their dangerous comrade; I continued my way with precaution, and arrived safely at my quarters.

I was billeted at the house of an old Saporoy-Cossack, for whom I had a great esteem, partly on account of the wild Tscherkessian tales he amused me with, and perhaps a little in consideration of his very charming daughter. She was, as usual, awaiting my return at the gate, wrapped up in her Cossack pelisse; the pale light of the moon was gleaming on her pretty face, and her pouting lips were blue with the intense cold of the night. She smiled, however, when she recognised me; but I was not particularly anxious for her smiles just then; I merely said, "Good night, Lisinka," in passing her. She seemed as though she wished to say something, but it ended in nothing but a gentle sigh; perhaps it was as much to the purpose, and explained all she meant as well as anything else.

I closed my door behind me, lit my candle, and soon after threw myself upon my bed; but sleep seemed for that night to be impossible, and I tossed and tumbled for hours like a suffering soul in purgatory. The light in the east had already begun to dawn, when I fell into an uneasy doze, but, evidently, it was written in the records of destiny that, for that night, at least, I should have no rest: for at about four o'clock in the morning I was aroused by a couple of fists knocking violently at my window—I sprang out of bed.

"Who is there?"

"Rise, quick, dress yourself, Zadonskoi!" shouted several familiar voices. I hastily drew on my clothes and sallied forth.

"Do you know what has happened?" said the three officers at once, whom I found awaiting me anxiously; they were as pale as death, and appeared greatly excited.

"How the devil should I? What *has* happened?" I inquired.

"Karnovitch is dead."

"How?"

"He is slain!"

I was thunderstruck.

"Yes, murdered!" continued they: "come, let us hasten on."

"Where?"

"At the head-quarters of the stanitz."

"But how has it happened?"

"On the road we shall tell you all about it."

We at once proceeded on our way, while they related to me all they had ascertained of this tragical termination to our evening's amusement, and illustrated the story with a thousand observations on the strange predestination which had saved our friend from an apparently inevitable death of his own seeking, but half an hour before the melancholy catastrophe. Karnovitch, it seems, was walking slowly and alone through the dark street that led to his quarters. The drunken Cossack, whose porcine victim I had nearly fallen over about the same time, ran up against him in his mad career, and would, perhaps, have passed, if the fated Servian had not stopped and questioned him: "Whom art thou in search of, friend?" he demanded sternly.

"*Thee!*" replied the infuriated ruffian, and, saying this, he struck a blow at him with his sabre, which cut him down, penetrating through the shoulder to his very heart.

The two Cossacks who had been in search of the inebriated

assassin, and whom I had myself met just before, came up in time to raise the wounded and dying man from the ground; he scarcely breathed, and lived but a few moments;—the last words he uttered were:—

“He was right!”

I was the only one at the time who understood the deep meaning of these simple words: they were intended for me, and for me alone. I had unwittingly foretold the poor fellow's impending destiny. My presentiment on this point again had not deceived me: I had read it clearly in the sudden change in his countenance. To my faith, at least in this omen, I am still strongly attached.

The murderer had taken refuge from the pursuit that had been instantly instituted, in an empty hut at the extremity of the stanitza. We all hurried there at once. A number of weeping and half-dressed women were also proceeding hastily in that direction, and wringing their hands wildly as they ran here and there; a few tardy Cossacks were pouring forth from their quarters, in the houses of the stanitza, half-accoutred and arranging their weapons, which were ringing about them as they ran. The trumpets and bugles were sounding the alarm, and but few guessed what was the real cause of the sudden *bourasque*. The uproar was at its height.

When we arrived at the scene of action we found a large crowd surrounding the hovel, the door and windows of which were fastened from within. Officers and soldiers were in animated conversation and in great excitement; the women shrieking and wailing, as usual, or whispering to each other their conjectures and opinions. The whole of this striking scene was illuminated by the flickering light of half-a-dozen torches, which throw their lurid reflections upon all that was passing, as the day was not yet sufficiently advanced, and mixing with

the dim, vague light of the struggling dawn, scattered a wild and ghastly tint upon the actors of the drama now impending.

In the midst of the group my eyes fell upon the remarkable face of an old woman, whose agonised features and gestures were expressive of the wildest despair. She was sitting upon a large log of wood, her long, thin arms resting upon her knees, and her face buried in her hands. Anon, she raised her head again. I never saw a countenance that spoke so loudly to the feelings of the intense mental suffering within. It was the mother of the murderer. At intervals I remarked that her lips were moving convulsively : were they murmuring a prayer for her wretched son, or a malediction on the avengers of blood and of military discipline ?

Meanwhile it became evident that steps should be immediately taken for the capture of the destroyer of poor Karnovitch. No one, however, appeared to be particularly anxious to volunteer for the initiative in this enterprise, which certainly presented considerable danger as well as difficulty : it was like having to hunt up and slay a maddened tiger.

I approached the window, and looked through the small orifice of the closely-fastened shutters. The villain was reclining, prostrate and pale, on the floor of the hut, his left hand grasping a holster-pistol. His sword, which was unbuckled from his waist, was also near him. His eyes rolled wildly in their sockets ; at times he would press his hands to his head, as if trying to recollect his actions of the preceding night, but I could not discover much determination in his uneasy glances, and I am something of a physiognomist ; I therefore observed to the major that the quickest method would be to order a file of the most determined Cossacks to break open the place and seize the savage at once, and before he had yet recovered his senses.



"The villain was reclining, prostrate and pale, on the floor, his left hand grasping a holster pistol."

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At that moment an old Jesaul (or sub-hetman) knocked at the door smartly, and called the man by his name—he answered :

“Thou hast sinned, brother Coomack,” said the old Jesaul ; “therefore thou couldst not do better, as a good soldier, than surrender.”

“I shall not surrender,” replied the Cossack ; “my blood is still on fire, and I shall slay many of our brothers.”

“Fear God !” said the grim old sub-hetman, in a soothing and caressing tone, “and thank him that thou art not a thievish and miserable Tscherkess, but a faithful Christian and a good soldier when thou hast not the *wodka* flask at thy mouth. And if thy sins have brought thee into trouble, thou canst not help thyself, brother Coomack ; thou couldst not command thy fate ! Surrender, I say !”

“Jesaul, I will never surrender !” shouted the Cossack wildly from the interior ; and we could hear the ringing of his sabre through the steel scabbard as he drew it. It was getting serious, and I knew that he also had his pistols with him.

“Hallo ! there, aunt !” said the sub-hetman to the old woman, “speak to thy miserable son, he might listen to thy voice. This can but make God and the emperor angry : and look here, the officers have been waiting for this last hour.”

The old woman looked inquiringly at the hetman for a moment, and then shook her head bitterly. “Ye will slay my child among ye, if he comes forth,” muttered the old Scythian ; “he is a soldier ; let him die with his arms in his hands, like a rider of the Don.”

“Basil Petrovitch,” said the veteran, saluting the major as if on parade, “he will not surrender. I know the man well ; he is a mad wolf when he has drunk thus ; and if we storm the door he will hurt many of us before we cut him down. Would it not be your pleasure that we shoot him at once ;

the holes in the shutters are large enough to admit a carbine barrel."

This mild suggestion of the old war-dog annoyed me, and I was determined the man should not be shot like a dog in a pit. He had committed a terrible crime as a soldier and a man; at the same time he was drunk, and perhaps he remembered nothing of what he had done. It was clear, too, that this extreme measure, which appeared to find favour with the majority, was as much approved of from the immunity from personal danger which it afforded them as from any other cause.

I was certainly for that night a predestinarian;—an inexplicable but obstinate determination at that moment entered my mind, and, like Karnovitch, I was resolved to try my fate.

"This will never do," said I to the major; "I volunteer for the forlorn hope, and I will take him alive."

My offer was acceded to in the handsomest manner possible, and I made my dispositions accordingly by ordering the sub-hetman to resume his conversation with the man within, while I posted three of the stoutest Cossacks near the door, prepared to dash it open by main strength at a moment's notice, and so be ready to assist me at a given signal. I then went round to the back of the hovel and approached the fatal window. I must admit my heart was beating, for it was indeed a perilous undertaking.

"Oh, thou miserable sinner!—thou cur of the Don!" exclaimed the old sub-hetman, speaking loudly to distract the attention of the doomed wretch within, "thou art jesting with us, art thou?—or dost thou think we cannot unkennel and muzzle thee?"

He here commenced knocking at the door violently with the hilt of his sabre, for the purpose of covering my operations and of making as much noise as possible. By putting my eyes close to the aperture I could follow every movement of the murderer,

who evidently did not expect an attack from the quarter where I was. The fastenings of the shutters were on this side of the most primitive kind ; I passed my hand through the whole and easily disengaged them, and in another moment I had burst them open, together with the window, and thrown myself into the room head foremost. Everything was as dark as Erebus ; a flash of fire at the same instant dazzled me, followed by a loud and ringing report—it was the Cossack's pistol, and the ball from it grazed my ear and tore away my epaulet ; but the lightning gleam had shown me my adversary, and I threw myself at once upon him, before he had time to use his sabre. I grasped him by the throat, my assistants now beat in the door, and at the same time poured in through the window ;—in less than three minutes the assassin was bound, though struggling frantically to the last, and led away under a strong escort. The people gradually dispersed, and the officers present began to compliment me,—and I really think for once I deserved it.

It was over, however ; I had done it, and I was unscathed.

After this, who would not become a fatalist ? But in after years I learned to observe how often it happens, that we accept for innate convictions the deception of our feelings or the errors of our own judgment. It is, however, very little consequence, after all, as worse than death we cannot possibly meet ; and dissolution we cannot possibly avoid !

I, soon after these singular adventures, proceeded onwards to my destination, the fortress of N——, to which I was on the march (*en penitence*) for my sins, in command of a provision convoy.

On my arrival I related the history of poor Karnovitch, and all that I had witnessed during those eventful hours, to my worthy friend the old Schtabz-Capitan Sorokin, the commandant of the fort, and I asked the simple-hearted veteran to give me his opinion upon predestination. He could not at first understand the

meaning of the theory, but I endeavoured to explain it to him to the best of my ability; I took some trouble to this end indeed, as I had nothing better to do, and I fully imagined I had succeeded, when to my discomfiture he answered sententiously, significantly shaking his grey head :

“Just so! exactly! oh, and that is predestination, is it? Well, now I see, and I must allow, this was certainly a daring and tragical joke enough. However, these Asiatic arms get very often foul, if not kept with immense care; their pieces are not kept sufficiently well oiled; the fact is, sir, they are afraid of destroying the gingerbread gold and silver that decorate them so absurdly. I must also confess, I do not even like the Tscherkessian rifles: they are true, I know, but some how or other they are not made for us, we can never feel at home with them; their looks, too, are infernal flint machines of the date of Nadir-Shah, and then you must look sharp that the flash from the pan does not burn your nose or singe your whiskers. But as for their ‘*shashkas*,’ they are real gems! I know no better steel, or any weapons better poised: a seraph could not desire a better sabre, I can assure you.”

It occurred to me that the Tscherkessian armourers would find very few customers among these “heavenly bodies;” but after a moment, he murmured thoughtfully and half abstractedly:

“But I am truly sorry for your friend; he seemed to have been a fine young fellow. The devil himself must have prompted him to have interfered at night with a drunken Cossack! However, it appears that he was destined to his fate since his birth! but I think it as likely that he, too, might have been drinking; these sabring arrangements are not at all unusual either, among those bearded gentlemen of the Don. There must be something lax about their discipline, I fear; but after all, I can’t see why the Deity (here he raised his foraging-cap from his grey head reveren-

tially,) should have fated the poor devil to have cut down his officer on that particular night, any more than that the just and bountiful Creator (and he again uncovered himself) had destined the Cossack, from his birth, to get drunk on that particular occasion."

However, I could extract no further expression of opinion from the excellent old Schtabz-Capitan; I had never before, indeed, heard so long a speech from his lips, and he certainly was not much given to metaphysical researches.

(Here ended Zadonskoi's Manuscript.)

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